

A Noble Cause

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Summary: Noble Six doesn't know how, but he ended up in the Mass Effect Universe. His armor is in lockdown but inside contains the info on how he got there and the knowledge of the UNSC. One Quarian might be able to crack it. Later Noble Six and Tali pairing.

1. One Way Ride

I found that I really liked the idea of Noble Six arriving in the Mass Effect universe. But the fanfic I found on here that depicted that I had a lot of issues with. So I took the liberty of crafting my own.

So basically this an experimental fic.

Lack of details about Shepard and Noble Six are entirely intentional. I want you the reader to be able to keep your image of Shepard and Noble Six true to how you see them. The only part that's forced is Shepard is a female and Noble Six is a male.

Disclaimer: I do not own Halo or Mass Effect, they belong to Microsoft and Bioware and if anyone honestly thinks the owner of either of those franchises would be writing a crossover about them on FFnet they need to get clubbed upside the head. Not really, but c'mon.

* * *

><p>Stepping onto the Purgatory gave Shepard a chilling sensation. She had a tendency to never get along with Mercs, and the Blue Suns were no exception.<p>

Walking forward with Garrus and Miranda behind her, Shepard kept her head high. On a twitch of curiosity, she questioned Miranda about the mission.

"So what is this package we're picking up?" Turning to Lawson.

"Subject-__ Enn-oh-six_ is currently held prisoner here, not much is known about him. But from what we can tell he was apparently found near a Mass Relay about 10 years ago."

"Just drifting out in space? Really?"

"He was wearing a sealed suit that resembled nothing on the lines of any human technology, and his strength is extremely superior. The Blue Suns got to him first and he's been kept in cryo-containment for the last decade."

Shepard felt like it was just better to roll with it, questions filled her mind but only so much could be explained. They were approaching the front guard.

The Turian merc started, "Welcome to the Purgatory Shepard, your packaged is being prepped and you can claim it shortly. As this is a high-security vessel, we need you to relinquish your weapons before you proceed."

Shepard, Miranda, and Garrus drew arms as if on cue, "I'll relinquish one bullet, where do you want it?"

A large Turian appeared from the back, "Everyone stand down! Shepard, I'm Warden Kuril and this is my ship. Your weapons will be returned on the way out, you must understand that this is simply standard procedure."

Shepard retorted back, "It's _my_ standard procedure to keep my gun."

Shepard and Kuril exchanged death glares when Kuril backed down, "Let them proceed, our facility is more than secure enough to handle three armed guests."

The guards walk to the side and take a seat, body motions depicting they're upset with the warden's decision.

"We're pulling _Enn-oh-six_ out of cryo, as soon as the funds clear you can be on your way. If you'll follow me to the processing for pickup commander." Kuril nudged his head to gesture Shepard forward.

"Let's go,"

For the next few minutes Kuril explained and boasted how the Purgatory was the most secure facility and how they had many ways to control prisoners. His mood when he left Shepard seemed off but she put it away as Kuril being a turian.

When it came to the processing chamber Shepard was quickly surprised to learn the truth behind Kuril and the facility.

"My apologies Shepard, you're more valuable as a prisoner than a customer. Drop your weapons and proceed into this open cell, you will not be harmed."

Rage boiled in Shepard's blood, instinctively reaching for her gun she retorted, "Go to hell! I'll send you there myself!"

"Activate systems!" The Blue Suns poured out of the far doorway laying down the pressure and the heat was on. After winding down a couple tunnels and facing a few firefights Shepard, Miranda, and Garrus approached the security control center.

Looking at the holo-computer Miranda said "If we hack that control, every door in the cellblock opens." Not to deter Shepard, Garrus finished with "It's the only way to get _Enn-oh-six_ out of cryo."

"I'm doing it, be ready," probably realizing she'd hesitate if she waited, Shepard hacked the panel and the doors across the entire ship were unlatched. Too busy watching the mechanical arm grabbing NO6's cryo-chamber to notice the chaos that was the prisoners running ramped. The three got their first glimpse of the soon-to-be new squad member who was covered in bulky armor and a helmet that shielded any view of whom he really was.

Having been used to cryo-sleep, NO6 without the slightest sense of frustration yanked out of his metal restraints and faced the awakening security mech's. The seven-foot tall metal titan charged them with a jump at the last second and ripping the head off the first while aiming the mech's gun at another mech using his superior strength. Shepard couldn't see the rest of the ordeal and soon realized she was watching for too long as Garrus tugged at her arm telling her, "We have to get down there."

About fifteen minutes later, Kuril lied dead and the Purgatory might as well been destroying itself. Having got a lucky glimpse of where NO6 was heading, Shepard and the other chased him to the docks.

NO6 saw the Normandy but wasn't exactly sure where to go or what to do. When he noticed Shepard walking down the hall, he pulled out the assault rifle he retrieved from a dead guard and pointed it at the commander.

"Identify your name, rank, and means of business or I will drop you!" Without the slightest hint of shaking, Noble Six moved like a born soldier, not wasting a single twitch in his actions.

"Calm down, I'm Commander Shepard and I'm here to take you off this station and to safety,"

"Safety? I was abducted and forced into cryo-sleep for an unknown amount of time, on a place that I don't know anything about. Filled with a bunch of ugly aliens that look nothing like the Covenant."

"Ugly? Is it the scars?" Garrus joked.

Wiping away the smile Shepard looked away from Garrus to NO6 and started, "I know you've got a lot of unanswered questions, but on a ship that's about to vent the rest of its atmosphere when there's a perfectly good escape isn't the best spot to chat it out."

A slight stall in reaction and NO6 lowered his gun, "Alright, it has

to be better than here,"

* * *

><p>Meeting in the conference room, NO6 didn't feel comfortable without his armor on which drew the attention of the entire crew as he marched perfectly with a pistol loosely in its holster. One wrong move and he was ready to retrieve it and down everyone on the ship.<p>

Shepard hated to admit it, but NO6 scared the hell out of her. Luckily Shepard's ability to maintain her stone cold demeanor was working and she wasn't letting the crew know how afraid she actually was.

Walking into the conference room, Jacob as always was there to greet their new guest.

"Welcome aboard the Normandy, umm..."

"Oh," NO6 realized he hadn't introduced himself, "I'm SPARTAN-B312 of Noble team lead by Noble Actual; Colonel Urban Holland. I'm Noble Six."

Both Shepard and Jacob were completely dumbfounded, but Jacob felt it was needed to finish introductions. "I'm Operative Jacob Taylor." Jacob reached out a hand as friendly gesture.

Delaying for half a second, Noble Six returned the favor with a firm handshake.

"Thank you Jacob," Releasing the handshake Noble Six then turned his head to try and look at Jacob and Shepard at the same time, "I hate to come off rude, but I really would like to understand where I am."

"What do you mean" Shepard replied with her arms crossed.

"This ship is run by an organization called Cerberus? And there's a whole slew of aliens I've never seen before. The technology of this place is so different than that of the UNSC's."

"U-N-S-C?" Jacob thought out loud.

"United Nations Space Corps, surely you've heard of it!" Seeking answers Noble Six pressed.

"I'm sorry, can't say I have," Jacob scratched the side of his head.

"And I'll speak on behalf on the rest of the galaxy as in we haven't either. Perhaps it would be best if you explained where you came from." Shepard took a step forward curious as to what Noble Six was going to say.

Noble Six sighed, and then started, "I'll try to sum it up as best I can. Before I ended up here I was on the doomed planet of Reach; the last line of defense before the Covenant got to Earth. Before you ask what the Covenant are; they are a conglomeration of multiple alien races united under one religion that apparently demands the

extinction of the human race."

"Reach? Never heard of it. But you mentioned Earth as well? Last I checked Earth was perfectly fine, it's run down, but it's fine," Shepard concluded. Noble Six then fixed his gaze on the commander.

"What is the current year by Earth calendar?"

"Twenty-one eighty-five." Noble Six dropped his head and spoke just loud enough so that Shepard could hear.

"Where I'm from, the year was twenty-five fifty-two."

Shepard's eye's widened along with Jacob's as both looked to each other for an answer.

Jacob spoke up, "Commander, I believed we've encountered first contact with a being from a parallel universe."

In complete surprise, the three just stared off into space realizing what this meant.

Noble Six was the first to break it, "In my head I was thinking I wound up in some far off part of the galaxy where Insurrectionists had set up and made contact with friendly aliens or something."

"Sorry Noble Six," Shepard started, "The Alliance has charted nearly the entire galaxy, we both have an Earth it seems, and here, there is no such thing as the Covenant or the UNSC."

Noble Six picked his head up, "This is just me hoping for the impossible, but I suppose you don't happen to have a way for me to get back do you?"

Shepard shook her head.

"Didn't expect soâ€¦"

"Look, Noble Six - ah do you have another name?"

"Shepard, just call me Noble Six or Six. I never want to forget themâ€¦" He lowered his head once again.

"Them?"

"Noble Team, my squad mates who sacrificed their lives in the struggle to save Reach. I should've been buried with themâ€¦"

"Sure thing Six," She took a deep breath and unfolded her arms. Walking towards Six she placed a hand on his right shoulder. "If we were to continue talking about this we'd be here for weeks. So let's get you settled in and I'll give you access to information about this universe. At any time you want to talk just let me know."

Six raised his head, "Yeah, I can do that."

Jacob re-entered the conversation, "Where would you like to be made your private quarters on the Normandy?"

"I'm not sure, preferably a place I can keep my equipment organized and secure."

"I think you'll want the spare-storage room on the engineering deck. I'll get some crew on it to set you up with a bed and some lockers."

Slightly bowing Six gestured, "Thank you Shepard, I'll make my way there now."

Marching out as professional as he came in, Six did what his Spartan training prepared him for and did his best to store his emotions after being so careless in the conference room. When he left Jacob turned to Shepard.

"Think I should be worried?"

"Doubt it, his life may have just turned upside down but he's obviously some kind of super soldier that's meant to deal with the hard stuff. You should've seen him take out those mechs."

"Understand Commander, but I hope you can understand that I'll be reserving my final opinion when we know more about him." He saluted the Commander and returned to his post.

* * *

><p>The spare-storage room was basically a semi-hidden entrance to a plain rectangular room beneath the engineering deck. By the time Six arrived, he had already noticed that much of the crew was carrying stuff down to accommodate the space for him. EDI even took the luxury of establishing a permanent hologram that looked like a window to help the room feel less like a prison cell.<p>

When the crew cleared out with the renovations in place, Six took a seat on the ground fearing what would happen if his half-ton armor made contact with the bed.

He had a minute to think to himself when Shepard walked in the door with a couple devices in hand, laying them on the table the crew brought in. She then redirected her attention to Six with her hands on her hips.

"What's that stuff?"

"Data pad, Omni tool, and a couple of other essentials you'll need to function in this Galaxy." Shepard grabbed the data pad and handed it to Noble Six

"Thanks Shepard," Six started to fiddle with the data pad. Looking up information about the universe was a no-brainer. He took his gaze away from Shepard as he skimmed the data displaying on it.

"Are you going to be alright?" Concerned, Shepard pushed for an answer.

"I don't know right now, I mean, I'm a Spartan and I should be able to handle the impossible. But a lot of me wishes I was dead back in

my own universe and not stuck out in this one wondering the fate of humanity. Feel like as if I let down my entire race."

"How'd you get here by the way?"

"â€|gah-I don't remember. One moment I'm on Reach and then the next I'm in space next to one of those 'relays' or whatever you called them."

"I can't imagine what you're feeling right now." Six didn't know what to say so he remained quiet. Shepard stood up and started to heads towards the door.

"Look Six, if you want I'll have our ship's counselor; Yeoman Chambers, see what she can do for you. And if there's anything you ever need let me know."

Sighing, Six took his eyes away from the data pad for a moment, "Not sure I actually need counseling. But thanks Shepard, for helping me with all of this."

"No problem Six, and who knows. Maybe killing some baddies will do you some good."

"Heh, maybe soâ€| in the meantime I'll read up on all of this."

Shepard nodded and walked out of the room. She knew Six would be a high-valuable asset on the field, but she wondered if his skills were worth the risk that he might have a psychotic breakdown.

Six lifted the pad up and began his research. Beginning with the aliens, not knowing where to start he went alphabetically. He was fascinated by how different they were from the covenant. Asari, Turian, Elcor, Batarian, you name it. It also was enlightening when he got around to learning the history of the universe and the current technologies they possessed. What he found amusing is that in some ways the UNSC was more advanced then the Alliance, but in other ways they weren't. He was inevitably surprised to learn that AI are considered a dangerous piece of equipment. But it rather made sense considering how dangerous the Geth was to the galaxy. He would've soon missed the soothing monotonous voice of Auntie Dot and other AI voices had EDI hadn't been around.

After an hour of Six filling his mind with information of the new universe, EDI appeared in his room.

"Six, Commander Shepard has offered you the chance to join her and Miranda Lawson on a mission. Do you wish to accept the offer?"

His inner-Spartan kicked back in, standing up straight he responded, "Affirmative".

"Then please head upstairs and take the elevator to the bridge and proceed to the armory to gear up."

"Thank you _eedee_."

* * *

><p>"From what I understand you were an all-rounded soldier correct?" Jacob asked.<p>

"That'd be correct, Colonel Taylor," Six replied.

"Hmm, well honestly I don't really know what to assign you as, so feel free to pick up two guns of your choice from the selection."

Six turned around to the tables where the armory laid out in front of him, he couldn't recognize any of the weapons so he turned around to Jacob puzzled.

"Sorry, didn't think about that, how about you just tell me what you're looking for."

"Preferably an assault rifle, single shot semi-automatic would be good, and a shotgun that has at least 4 rounds in a barrel and fires decently-fast."

Jacob snapped his fingers, "I know just what you're looking for." He picked up a M-96 Mattock and a Scimitar shotgun. "I don't know if your universe had the kind of tech, but weapons fold up for concealment with the press of a button."

Six held onto the butt of the mattock when he touch the switch and watch the rifle fold up in front of him.

"If you like, I can give you a harness to hold them, or you can do it your way."

Six thought he didn't want the guns to be a problem when he needed to draw them out in tight situations and they'd still be unfolding.

"I'll keep it old fashioned, thanks colonel." With a nod, Six walked to the elevator to proceed down to the docking bay.

Arriving downstairs, Shepard and Miranda were chatting amongst themselves when the elevator doors opened. Their eyes locked on his armor, if Miranda didn't know any better, she would have saluted Six.

"Noble Six reporting for duty commander!" Six stiffened up and saluted Shepard.

"At ease soldier," Shepard crossed her arms and cocked her head slightly sideways in attempts to relax around Six who despite his apparent loyalty to the chain of command, only made her feel uneasy.

"What's our mission?" Six eased himself from his at-attention stance.

Miranda began, "We're heading to the planet Korlus, a Krogan Warlord by the name of Okeer is there and we need to find him."

"Is that it?"

"Wish, the facility he's located is a ruin of old ships that's

heavily guarded by the Blue Suns. In other words, the same group that held you captive in cryo-sleep for the last 10 years." Miranda finished.

"Alright then, ready to engage the enemy at any time commander." No signs of a need for revenge could be heard in his voice. Shepard was quite impressed how he managed to deadlock emotional tugs.

Shepard then focused her attention on the hatch to their ride down onto the surface and popped it open. The mission would soon begin.

* * *

><p>Five hours later, the crewmen were hitching up a forklift to the pod containing Okeer's 'perfect' Krogan.<p>

One of the men walked up to Shepard, "Where do you want him commander?"

She yanked her helmet from her head, shook her hair loose feeling the sweat and grease buildup causing it to cling together, "put him in the cargo hold for now, you can get him in there right?"

"It'll be a tight squeeze but I'm pretty sure we can fit him through the maintenance elevator commander."

"Thanks, I'll figure out what to do with him in a little bit."

Shepard found Noble six observing the tank as the crewmen began hauling it off, she nudged him on the shoulder to get his attention. When he turned to her she began,

"You mind standing guard in the cargo hold with our new guest for the time being?"

"Yes ma'am," He stood straight and saluted.

She laughed a bit about his strict formalities, "At ease Six, I'll be back down in a half an hour or so." As she said that she turned to the center elevator and set her target for the captain's quarters. For how tired she was, a nice shower, and a few minutes checking things on the extranet could be spared before she continued on with her duties.

Fifteen minutes later, Shepard walked into the COM room to see Miranda and Jacob arguing.

"Bringing the Krogan for study makes sense, but I have concerns about waking it,"

"Yeah, you've said that a few times now." Jacob was tired of hearing the same crap over and over.

"A normal Krogan is dangerous. This one was created, and likely educated, by a madman."

"There's no way he's getting out unless one of us lets him out," Shepard interjected.

"Or unless Okeer installed some sort of failsafe. Or a malfunction causes the tank to shut down."

"Relax, I have Six guarding the tank, you saw what he did on Korlus to those other Krogan yourself."

Miranda looked down laughing a bit, "I didn't even know it was possible to kill a Krogan with one movement of a combat knife."

"What's even more impressive is that he barely knows their inner workings yet he could analyze them so quickly and detect where to strike." Shepard added

Miranda lifted her head, "Okay, all my worries are put aside. Not that you needed my approval or anything."

"Understand," With that Miranda and Jacob made their leave as Shepard took a moment to gather her thoughts before she headed toward the elevator.

At the engineering deck, Shepard walked into the cargo hold to find Six standing guard like he was outside of Buckingham Palace. At that point Shepard realized that Six was going to get to her every time with his level of discipline.

"Relax Six, this isn't the queen of England," she laughed. "Just back me up incase this Krogan tries anything."

"You're opening the tank?"

"You got a problem with that?"

"Sorry, just for clarification."

"Right then, let's open the hatch."

EDI chimes in, "Cerberus protocol is very clear regarding untested alien technology."

Shepard rebuked, "He's either a powerful addition to the crew or a time bomb. I'd rather deal with it now."

"Very well Shepard. The controls are online. The switch â€" and consequences â€" are yours."

Shepard stepped forward to the holographic panel and pressed the proper command to open the tank.

The tank's nutrient-filled water level began to lower. Shepard stepped back while Six drew his serrated combat knife for safe measure. As the tank's water depleted the hatch began to unseal.

The Krogan inside stumbled out of the tank and landed on the floor of the deck on all fours. He coughed up a couple of gallons of nutrient-water caught in his throat before he stood on two legs.

The Krogan analyzed his situation; in front of him were two smaller beings. A Human female â€" soft and weak â€" and a humanoid figure completely covered in armor that held a deadly weapon and posed ready

for combat. This was obviously the bigger threat and such he desired the challenge.

Six knew what was about to happen, the Krogan (which he had downed plenty already) had that look in his eyes. In a moment the colossal alien was charging straight at him. Six took a stance like a Sumo-wrestler and braced for the impact. They collided with massive amounts of force but Six with his half-ton armor and augmented levels of strength absorbed the impact as his boots skidded slightly back on the floor.

Six jerked his head back before he head butted the Krogan with his helmet. The Krogan stumbled back just long enough for Six to roundhouse kick him which caused the Krogan to fall to the floor with a massive crash.

Six jumped on top of him, with the knife still in hand he pointed it right for his forehead.

"You will stand down and obey the order of Commander Shepard, or I _will_ _have_ to put you down like I did with so many others before you."

The Krogan smirked before he lifted his hands up and grabbed Six by the sides. He then threw him back towards Shepard (who jumped out of the way). Six crashed up against the walls of the storage room.

Six felt his back ache in pain but he knew he couldn't delay for a second. He lifted himself back up to find the Krogan charging him again.

Six also realized his knife was off to the side. Improvising, he pulled back a fist before launching forward and hitting the Krogan on the nose. It didn't stop the Krogan's forward momentum but it wasn't hard to tell he lost his concentration.

Six pushed him off of himself. He took the chance to swing at the Krogan again who surprisingly had regained his focus so quickly as he grabbed Six's fist.

Six used his open left arm to punch the Krogan so he'd release his fist. It worked, and now they were back on equal footing again.

A split second later a pistol appeared at the side of the Krogan's head. It was from Shepard, "You should've taken Six's words. One more move and I drop you."

The Krogan didn't care about the threat. He quickly punched Shepard's gun out of her hand and then turned his attention back to Six. He grabbed Six by the sides and threw him out of the room.

But as Six flew threw the door it also closed behind him.

EDI chimed in, "Protocol issues to detain the threat, and until the Krogan is subdued no one is allowed to exit or enter."

"What?" Six walked up and pounded on the door, "Shepard needs me! I can't leave her in there with that rabid animal."

EDI took attempts to calm him down, "She'll be fine Six, trust me on

that."

Six didn't get much time to read up on Shepard when he sat down with the data pad earlier but he knew that to be true.

"And currently, The Illusive Man would like to see you in the COM room."

"The Illusive Man?"

"The leader of Cerberus, he was _very _interested in meeting you."

Six amused himself, "guess it's not everyday you meet someone from a parallel universe is it?"

EDI chose not to reply to that, "He was the one that paid for you to get off the prison facility."

Six felt he'd stop talking for the time being.

As he entered the COM room, the table lowered into the floor and the room darkened as a holographic tube with a grid-like pattern encompassing it.

Six stepped into the cylinder and he saw before him a room that certainly was very much a holographic display itself. The floor was made of reflective material, and before him was a man with unnatural looking eyes that were obviously mechanical, he was sitting in a three-legged chair with a cigarette in one hand and the other free. Behind him was the projection of a gaseous planet emitting its red glow.

Noble Six spoke first, "Are you the man I owe my release from cryo-sleep-imprisonment?"

"Think nothing of it Noble Six,"

Six cut him short, "I appreciate the gesture â€" but please â€" just call me Six."

"Six then, regardless of unnecessary formalities or not think nothing of it. I had every intention of getting you off The Purgatory as soon as you got on there. I just needed a little more incentive. Had I known you really were from another universe, let's just say I would've paid your ticket off that station before you set foot on it."

"I haven't even told you about that, care to explain how you know."

The Illusive Man took a whiff of his cigarette, "Please Six, information is my weapon. I 'm supposed to know what my enemies â€" and my allies â€" think before they do."

"That would've been helpful against the Covenant for sure."

"Speaking of which," The Illusive Man interjected, "I'm very interested in the universe where you came from."

"Why wouldn't you be?"

"It's not just the fact that you are from a parallel universe but also the similarities apparent between us. Yet there are differences. For instance, I understand Earth exists in your universe." The Illusive Man pulled up a holographic display of it, "Like this?"

"Exactly like that."

"And yet these 'Covenant' you speak of. Do any of the alien races in this universe are the same as yours?"

"Not one,"

"See that's what interests me, along with the fact that you somehow managed to wind up in this universe, next to a Mass Relay of all things. Suggesting in some way our universes are tied, or connected. Whichever use of words suits your fancy."

"Considering the endless variables but the sheer infinite amount of possible parallel dimensions, perhaps it was just by sheer luck. There might be universes where the Covenant are the only beings in Milky Way."

"A possibility yes, but once again that doesn't explain how you appeared in our universe near a relay. Tell me Six, do you remember what happened before you left your universe?"

Six shook his head, "It's so fuzzy, those last moments. Heck the last thing I recall is entering one of the last bunkers on Reach â€" CASTLE base â€" after that I can recall nothing."

"Well, perhaps your helmet cam does."

"Probably so but my armor's locked up ever since I got here."

"Locked up?"

"My suit is programmed to lock up and explode when it detects alien intrusion so information stored on my drive doesn't fall into Covenant hands, or the suit itself. Something about the jump seems to have fried the exploding part of that function, thankfully."

"What else was stored on your drive."

"Virtually everything, the UNSC prepared for a million possible extinction scenarios. One of their plans included having the SPARTAN program and all available Spartans get as far away from the Covenant and the UNSC as possible to start somewhere else. My suit has virtually all of our history, technological advances, and the like in a compact memory crystal."

The Illusive Man thought for a second, "any possible way we can unlock your armor?"

"You can try, but you'd need a mechanic that'd be able to understand the tech."

"That might be a possibility already."

Six found that statement to be a little bold, "I don't think you understand what I mean. When humanity in this universe built their technology upon the Mass Relays, you took a completely different course than the UNSC. The UNSC never had alien interference in our technology, and henceforth our technology is vastly different down to the most basic software."

"That's true, and by following the technology of the Reapers we have doomed ourselves into being technologically inferior to them. Which is why your presence may be the luckiest turn of events for the sake of humanity, for the galaxy maybe. If what you say is true about the information drive stored in your suit. Than we may have a shot at defeating the Reapers."

"Maybe, but you still haven't answered me on how you plan on accessing my drive when my armor is still on lockdown."

"Leave that to me Six, your technology may be structured differently but that doesn't mean it's unbreakable. In the meantime however I'm interested in learning more about your universe. Perhaps if it's not too much to ask, if you take time every day detailing information on your data pad and sending it to me."

"I see no problem with that."

"Thank you Six, let me know if there's anything I can do for you."

With that The Illusive Man severed the connection. Six turned around to find Shepard leaning up against the door to the COM room with her arms folded. She wore a look of some concern Six could notice.

"What seems to be the problem?"

"What's your opinion on The Illusive Man?" Shepard ignored him, obviously pining for something out of Six.

"Well he paid my way out of prison â€" not that it did any good considering the malfunction in negotiations â€" but he came off to me like a good person. What can I put against him honestly?"

"More than you realize," Shepard started, "The Illusive Man may present himself like so but everything he does is surely for ulterior motives."

"With all do respect Shepard, people without ulterior motives to their actions are hard to come by." Six defended, "from what I've read up on you so far, he brought you back from the dead, and it wasn't cheap either."

"Of course it wasn't, but that doesn't mean I have to trust him."

"I am assuming there's a lot to this that I'm not aware of."

"Plenty,"

"Well then, I'll trust your judgment Shepard, but understand I don't hold anything against Cerberus or The Illusive Man either."

"I can be fine with that." Shepard unfolded her arms.

Six almost forgot, "How did the whole thing with the Krogan go,"

"His name is Grunt, but fine really. Once you left he pinned me to the wall and I talked him into joining us. He was very impressed by you, I think it was part of the reason he agreed into becoming apart of the crew."

"Well he wasn't making it easy on me, he was more powerful than any of the Krogan I killed on Korlus."

Shepard had something on her mind, "How did you get so strong in the first place?"

Six thought for a moment before taking a deep breath and began, "the SPARTAN program was always about drug augmentations to increase strength, endurance, intelligence, and so forth. I understand they even considered implementing one that would make our skulls nearly unbreakable."

"So you just got injected with drugs and sent into combat?"

"Far from it Shepard, see I was apart of the SPARTAN-III program. Everyone apart of it were kids from the ages of six to nine at the start of training. By as early as fourteen most of us were ready for combat."

"Wait, did you say _six _years old?" Shepard looked like she just found out someone poisoned her drink.

"Well yes, the UNSC felt it necessary to have expendable heroes. They never went public about the SPARTAN-III program â€" Or the SPARTAN-I program for that matter â€" but everyone apart of the program knew humanity needed us. You have to understand Shepard, the last planet I was on in my universe, Reach was the UNSC's equivalent of a fortress world, and the last planet before the Covenant would find Earth. We had been fighting a bloody struggle to slow down our inevitable extinction, anything that could've been the magic bullet to win was considered and likely looked into."

Shepard was quiet for a few moments realizing the gravity of the situation he explained, "you mentioned that they didn't go public about the SPARTAN-III and SPARTAN-I programs. What about the second?"

Six recollected the short time he not only spent fighting beside Jorge, but also his old teacher â€" Kurt â€" the others he had come to know like Shelia, and the famed Blue Team. "The SPARTAN-II program was much more selective than mine. Unlike the typical 300 they'd chose in every company for the SPARTAN-III program, they selected seventy-five children with the UNSC's best genetics who were the ages of six and seven. They were trained until they were seventeen or eighteen years old and went through much more rigorous training, drug augmentations, and had better suits. At least for a while, I'm wearing a suit similar to what they had for nearly twenty-five years

now. Except for shield technology, that's recent."

"Why did they go public about them?"

"They told the public that they were volunteer units in the military willing to dedicate their existence to save humanity regardless of what they become. But that of course couldn't have been further from the truth. People just needed a symbol of hope, and a Spartan standing over a mountain of dead Covenant was a pretty strong one."

"That makes sense, I can't imagine what it must've been like, fighting for survival like that. I mean sure the threat of the Reapers is significant but it's been a rather indirect war surrounded by the annoyances of bureaucracy."

"Kind of like out of the fire and into the frying pan wouldn't you say?"

"Ironically yes, thanks Six for telling me all of that. I'd like to know more too, so anytime you want to talk feel free to meet with me."

"You and The Illusive Man both," Six stretched out a hand, "I'll keep that in mind." Shepard extended her hand and they shook on it.

* * *

><p>The Illusive Man had a holographic interface displayed in front of him, contemplating about the best candidate for getting in Six's armor and accessing the information without messing something up and possibly reactivating the exploding part of his failsafe. Then build a device that can read the memory drive and display it's contents allowing to be transferable to their own drives.<p>

He opened up a dossier that he planned on passing to Shepard soon, _perhaps I need to give it to her early, _he thought to himself. The itch to discover what Six had stored in his suit was too much to consider delaying. So he highlighted the dossier that was titled "Tali Zorah," and sent it off to Shepard.

2. The Package

Okay I will say up front I did not expect such a massive response to this so I appreciate deeply all the feedback I've gotten. I've taken concerns into deep consideration, specifically details and how the other chapter felt rushed. Let me know if I improved with this one please.

* * *

><p>Six leaned up against the back wall of the elevator. He had to admit, the Normandy was no Halcyon class cruiser in size, heck it wasn't even a frigate in terms of size. But he was impressed by it without a doubt. It was a beautiful thing to look at from the outside and from what he could tell. The Normandy was a little more liberal in terms of space usage (which was a mortal sin when designing any ship in the UNSC) but everything felt snug all the same.<p>

Thing was though he never liked ships, at least the ones he couldn't fly himself. Than again no soldier ever did, being in a ship meant you put your fate in the hands of a pilot, the engineering, and combat crew. You had no control over if the ship was about to be ripped apart (which was often what happened in the hundreds of battles between the UNSC and the Covenant).

The Normandy was a little different; perhaps getting to know the seemingly small amount of other crewmembers might do well to calm his nerves.

That's what he was about to do actually, not only did he feel the need to meet with Grunt a second time but he also felt it important that he comes to know the other crew better. Even if this one was someone who didn't have a finger in controlling the ship. Still, improving relations with Grunt seemed important. Also, Six left his combat knife in there.

When the elevator door opened, Six saw took notice this time of the window pane viewing down on the cargo bay. In the corner was the small passenger vehicle that got them to the surface on Korlus.

"Such an inefficient vehicle," Six thought to himself. Comparing between the Pelican (which could hold 12 men easily and carry a Scorpion tank) and practically the 'Space Sedan' he decided to call it, there was no match. He understood they really didn't need a Pelican for their kind of jobs but the sheer difference in terms of transporting efficiently was rather staggering.

Six then realized he was wasting time pondering stuff that really did not need to be pondered. He turned towards his left and walked down the hallway and saw the holographic panel for Grunt's door indicate it was opening automatically.

In there, sitting in a position one would expect a Krogan to be meditating in was Grunt. The same Krogan he had squared off with in hand to hand combat was now looking at him with a smile. An almost mischievous one at that, like Grunt had something planned. The Krogan then began to stand up.

Six kept in mind Shepard telling him earlier that he impressed Grunt. Stowing away any fear or doubts about this meeting he started.

"Nice to meet you again Grunt," Six extended an arm as a friendly gesture.

"I share the same attitude," Grunt returned with the Krogans more powerful form of the handshake to him. Six wasn't expecting it but it didn't bother him in the slightest.

"You are strong for a human," Grunt was keeping his grip in the handshake for a little bit longer.

"I take pride in it,"

"As you should," Grunt retracted his hand finally. "Humans, Salarian, Asari, Batarian, Drell, and many more are soft. Even such hulking beasts as the Elcor are weak. Yet here you are, at my awakening and being everything Okeer told me Humans were not. It's almost

invigorating."

"Reaching my physical prowess sure wasn't easy. I've been training since a young age, and when I wasn't training I was fighting wars."

Grunt spread his arms out, "Like a true warrior, I didn't think Humans had such willpower within themselves. If we were on Tuchanka, we'd truly see how a human warrior would fare against warriors of the Krogan."

_Tuchanka, that was the Krogan's home planet. _Six thanked his eidetic memory he conditioned himself into during his training. "That'd be interesting but I thought I was already facing the perfect Krogan a half an hour ago."

"Heh, you were. But a fight just between us won't satisfy my curiosity. Besides, I think we can help each other out."

Six smirked under his helmet already having an understanding of what Grunt was talking about. "What do you have in mind?"

"This ship is full of weak specimens that wouldn't last a second when facing me. But _you, _you can challenge me, help keep me sharp for battles to come. Help keep yourself sharp too."

"So you want to spar practice with me?"

"Exactly,"

Six liked the idea, "It sure beats sitting in my room with nothing to do but read. Let's do it."

"Excellent, let me know anytime you're ready."

"We can probably get to a session in a little bit, I've got to take care of some stuff first. Also, have you seen my knife?"

Grunt pointed at the back corner of the room, "right where you left it."

Six walked over, bended down and picked up his knife. He sheathed it and faced Grunt, "I'll be back in a little bit."

"I'll be waiting."

Six wanted to get more reading done on this universe. He only had an hour before he went with Shepard to Korlus to research on it all. Granted he was able to learn a lot within that hour thanks to his photographic memory but one could obviously not understand the world within an hour.

When he arrived at his room, (which was a bed in the right corner near the door, a table in the middle and a hologram projection of space outside by EDI) the discussion with The Illusive Man returned to him. Somehow both of their universes had humans and they existed on Earth. If both of those variables (how seemingly impossible odds) were the same, what else was the same between them? How much of their history turned out the same?

Six sat down on his bed grabbing his data pad and made his way onto the Extranet. He started with the first historical event he could think of; the 300 Spartans against the Persian army.

They were the same.

He looked up World War 2. Everything he remembered about World War 2 appeared the same. They even both had the movie "Saving Private Ryan" directed by the same director; Steven Spielberg.

He continued to search more events until he came across what set them apart. The discovery of the Relays in this Universe never happened in his own. And from there history deviated down a different course. He couldn't recognize any of the names

He was left dumbfounded, Humans in two completely different universes but somehow shared the exact same history for so long? Even down to the same historical figures. Was it a matter of mankind having no outside influence? That was the only thing that seemed likely but the odds were well against just about all of that. Such an event would mean they both started at the exact same origin at the _exact_ same time.

Six almost felt sick to the stomach. This went against everything he was told before by AI that were far smarter than him and the many people he asked about understanding of parallel universes and/or dimensions (usually during Slipspace travel.)

But somehow their universes were tied, or else he wouldn't have ended up here. And he appeared _by_ a Mass Relay, the same thing that caused their histories to deviate from one another. Then again, if Humans never discovered the Relay they would've stayed the same course until they came in contact with the Alliance. But that's not the point.

The more he thought on it the more he wanted to know but it only lead him into a migraine. So he switched to learning more about this Universe's and even the other people on the ship. Shepard had allowed him access to everyone's files except for their most personal accounts.

At the current time the crew was sufficient in size consisting of names like Garrus, Miranda, Jacob, Mordin and recently Grunt. Apparently they still had about five more people intended for the crew two of which were being paid a lot of money by The Illusive Man to join the crew.

Six continued his research into the database, his focus shifting to Earth.

In this Universe, Earth was run down, a shadow of its former glory but for most of humanity it's still considered home it seems and in some ways it's still progressing. It was a very confusing read to for Six.

There was also an article about planets that were referred to as "New Earth's" or human colonies like Bekenstein. Six took a look at its satellite imagery and couldn't recall a Colony like it in the UNSC. For all he knew not even the Covenant had ever found this planet.

_If they succeed the mission and the war is over, I wonder if they find it what it will be called. _The goofy thought ran through Six's head. He then began to think about the other planets he knew so well existed in this universe. If Earth did so would they right?

Six scoured the database for life-sustaining planets near Earth. Unfortunately the Alliance's star charts and systems of measurements were unlike anything the UNSC did. Reach was one of the nearly eight hundred planets the UNSC estimated to have colonized to some degree before the Covenant war began.

_We had colonized and charted all those planets, and if we never discovered Bekenstein that means we weren't even close to charting _half _the galaxy if our colonization went in the direction I think it did._ _And yet here they have circumnavigated it and seemed to have skipped over much if not all of what the UNSC held. _

Six then researched into more into the means of space travel. The Alliance Mass Effect drives can allows starships to cover roughly twelve light years in a day. And with the Mass Relays there was no comparison legible.

He recalled the FTL drives of the UNSC, big clunky machines that spewed radiation to force their way into a constantly changing dimension where a ship could typically tracked two-point-six light years in an Earth day. And Slipspace was a very unsafe place to be. Were it not for an AI making quadrillion of calculations for every second in Slipspace a ship could either be lost in the dimension or torn apart by it.

_What if you could use a Mass Effect drive within Slipspace? _Six thought immediately realized that was an extremely bad idea.

As it was explained to him, space was like a sheet of paper; Slipspace was that same sheet of paper crumbled into a tight but undefined ball. Within Slipspace, a ship was technically moving at normal speed available through its thrusters. The idea that a ship would be moving at a speed of twelve light years in a day in a dimension where even cruising speed could allow a ship to track a light year in a day in normal space lead to some scary numbers in his head. And given the fact that the laws of physics in Slipspace were unlike anything in normal space he didn't know how the Mass Effect core would act within it.

What made it even more improbable was how would they fit Shaw-Fujikawa drive in the Normandy along with the Mass Effect drive. Although the drives could vary in size greatly (like the one that was loaded into the back of a Pelican to create an 'accident' for the Covenant Super Carrier) one that would be sufficient to allow a ship as big as the Normandy into Slipspace would have to occupy the vast majority of the cargo bay.

As Six slowed down his thought process, he realized his brain was in more pain than ever now. He wanted to stop thinking about these things but he couldn't help it. No one else in this universe (and back in his own) was ever and likely would ever be in the kind of situation he's in now. All the more reason to dig deeper but his brain ached.

He needed to get his mind off of it, and he couldn't think of a better way than take up on Grunt's offer a little earlier than he originally intended.

* * *

><p>Shepard was lying on her bed in some quite liberally casual clothing (faded light blue self-cut short jean shorts and a gray tank top) that she only allowed herself in the utmost privacy. The Normandy was en route to the Citadel to find the expert thief The Illusive Man paid to be on her team.<p>

Browsing the extranet was something she took much pleasure in, and not in the typical fashion nearly everyone in the galaxy could admit to doing. Shepard had matured and trained herself to realize such activity was only a waste of time. Her time on the extranet meant reading stories from aspiring authors, watching hilarious web series, and a healthy dose of the extranet culture much like that of humanity nearly two hundred years ago.

Shepard also took pleasure in spending time with her relatively newfound friend Kelly (or Yeoman Chambers.) The two had become extremely close over the past couple of weeks. So much so the two were hanging out in Shepard's quarters like two teenage girls they allowed themselves to be in such privacy. Chambers was actually supposed to show up soon after she got done with some work.

When her laptop ping with the sound that indicated a message arrived in her private terminal she groaned and rolled her eyes when it distracted her from finishing her reading. She opened her inbox to find it was from The Illusive Man titled, 'Urgent.'

Shepard opened the letter and it read:

Shepard, I know you heard most of what Six explained to me because you were in the COM room as well soon after him and I began.

"Got that right," She smiled at the comment.

She continued reading:

With that in mind you are aware that his armor is locked up and we require a tech expert that can crack it. Therefore it is vital we make sure this person is safe from any possible dangers they can get into and aboard the Normandy as soon as possible.

_The individual is your friend Tali'Zorah, and I've uncovered information revealing that she is currently en route to the Far Rim for the planet Haestrom in the Dholen system. A team of Quarian Marines accompanies her but I fear they won't be sufficient to protect them for long against the massive Geth occupation there.

—

Their mission is going to take them time; you and I both know she won't leave until the job is done. Unfortunately, time to build up the team is a luxury we can't afford to lose .

_I believe our best course of action is to send Six to Haestrom with the understanding of Tali's importance to accessing his armor and inform her that we could use her on the team to stop the Reapers.

When the task is done, I'll need you to pick them both up from Haestrom. During that time, continue to track down the other people for the team._

It's a risk that we send Six on a planet full of Geth but I have the utmost confidence in his abilities and we cant afford to lose Tali.

While his message was very clear of what he was asking, Shepard was left with mixed feelings. Her concern for Tali's safety was telling her that this was for the best but she didn't want to run the risk of Six dying in an effort to protect her. She would much rather intercept whatever ship she's on now, and pick her up, but Tali wouldn't stand for that, just like The Illusive Man reminded her.

Realizing The Illusive Man was right, she sighed feeling her personal time was now cut. She frowned and proceeded to get up from her bed.

"Guess Kelly and I won't be able to spend some quality time together." Shepard walked over to her couch where she left her Cerberus branded button down black/gray/white suit top and pants. Not caring enough to properly change, she slipped them over the clothes she already had on.

* * *

><p>Six's arm muscles were pulsing a violent rhythm as the blood in his veins rushed to provide them with oxygen. He was in a deadlock against Grunt both trying to push each other back causing for a massive amount of force between them. If one slipped he was sure to be knocked on his rear end by the force the other was applying.<p>

Six found his moment to make his move when the Krogan breathed a bit heavier than usual. The Spartan felt a jolt of adrenaline fill his body and quickly applied as much force to his push as his body could muster "if not more" causing Grunt to lose his focus and was now flying backwards as his suit crashed first against the floor. His personal energy shield took most of the impact.

Though the Krogan saw he had been beaten in this face-off between them. He smiled as the Spartan walked over to him and offered a hand to lift him off the ground. Grunt accepted the helping hand, both of them knew he didn't need any help in that but it was a matter of the developing mutual respect between them.

As they both stared at one another for a moment, the reptilian alien spoke, "ready for more?"

"As always," the lieutenant positioned himself in martial arts stance preparing for the next attack.

Grunt threw a punch with incredible force; Six caught the fist mid-swing and deflected it off to the side of him. The Krogan continued with a right hook, which six ducked before countering with an uppercut to the jaw.

Six felt his fingers ached against slamming into the hard-surface

scales on the alien's chin. But the desired effect was achieved as Grunt's head jerked back threatening his equilibrium before he stumbled and caught himself from completely toppling over. He felt his jaw ache from the impact and his head felt fuzzy.

But there was no time to delay, regardless of his shaky state he pushed forward and swung his head forward to smack into the Spartan's helmet. Six launched both arms forward and caught the forehead but underestimated the sheer force behind it. The Krogan's head continued forward and smashed into his own helmet.

The lieutenant felt massive reverberation as if a ten-ton anvil just dropped on his head. He lost his footing and his legs skidded forward and his tail end dropped to the ground. What had been a miracle was that despite the massive force his helmet's visor did not crack in the least bit in all of it.

Six felt the wind leave him and was refusing to return. It felt like a Brute Chieftain just crushed his head with a gravity hammer. He knew he had to get up and retaliate but all his body apparently wanted to do was sleep.

He then felt a very strong hand wrap around his neck, The Krogan was now picking him up and lifting him into the air like and Elite did to marine before they stabbed them with their deadly energy swords.

A memory came back to him, during the years apart of Beta Company. He was fifteen years old in his SPI armor when an Elite in gold armor lifted him off the ground and roared in his face before he was ready to run him through with the cunning blue blade sparking energy off it's surface.

In this time, the young Spartan had gripped the Elite's death grip on his neck and acted quickly as he lifted his torso extended his legs as they landed on the alien's shoulders. He used his feet as hook as he pulled the two close together before he then grabbed the Sanghelli's head and twisted it until it snapped from the neck causing instant death.

Now in the grip of the Krogan, he knew twisting his neck wasn't a possibility and the last thing from being a good idea. But he did throw his legs up on the sides of the Krogan's armor before using his leg strength to draw him closer. In a split second Six dropped his legs from this hold and took a finger and rammed it into the Krogan's blue left eye.

Grunt felt the jolt of pain and loss of vision in his left eye almost immediately. Instinct kicked in causing him to lose his grip on Six's neck and went to protect his eye.

Six took his first deep breath in minutes before he prepared a swing at his sparring partner. Grunt jumped back before the fist could make contact with him, using the space between them he leaned forward and began to charge the Spartan like they did in their first meeting.

Six like before took Sumo-Wrestler stance ready for the impact when he caught something out of the corner of his eye. In the doorway was Commander Shepard in her gray, black, and white suit with the Cerberus insignia. The chain of command lead him to immediately

forget about the alien charging at him as he snapped to attention and saluted his superior.

A split-second later Grunt rammed into his side and took off with him into the wall. Six felt squished like a pancake as both his sides ached in pain. He realized what he just did and felt there wasn't enough kicking himself in the world that could make up for such mistake.

As soon as Grunt saw Shepard he backed off the hold he had on Six. The Spartan took a moment to collect himself before he was at attention beside the Krogan waiting for the Commander to say something.

"Shepard, I apologize for the display, we were in the middle of a training session." The Lieutenant saluted once again and also made for perfect posture.

"And here I was thinking the two of you weren't getting along," Shepard laughed with a goofy smile on her face contemplating how such an odd but somehow to-be-expected relationship between the two had formed.

Grunt spoke up, "Far from it Shepard, Six here is a worthy fight, through and through. Him and I are doing well to keep the other ready for battles to come."

"That's fine with me, however bear in mind that while it is good to train. Exhausting yourself before the mission even begins is nothing but a bad idea."

"Point taken, anyway, what can we do for you Commander?"

Shepard crossed her arms and leaned back a bit before continuing, "The Illusive Man has found a mechanic that should be able to access your armor in its current state. However there is some complication's that going to require something rather risky on your part."

"I'm all ears," Six relaxed a bit in his stance waiting for Shepard to go into detail about it.

Shepard explained everything she knew about Haestrom, its dying sun, the Geth control over it, the Quarian that was the dire piece of the puzzle to accessing his armor's locked away secrets. She made it clear to him that she didn't like the idea of leaving Six on a hostile planet against enemies he's never encountered with his only allies being a small force of Quarian's he didn't know for squat.

"The Illusive Man trust's your abilities but that doesn't make me any more comfortable about it. But we can't risk something bad happening to Tali nor can we waste time with building up the team."

The Krogan who had been listening this whole time to the Commander's words spoke up. "Perhaps, I go with him?"

Both of the humans in the room turned to the alien that had just offered his personal assistance in the matter.

"Are you sure Grunt? You just got on the Normandy."

The Krogan smirked, "All the more reason to leave for Haestrom yes? This mission is speaking my language; slim chances, big enemies, and dangerous conditions. I need that Shepard, by myself I could handle this mission on my own. With Six there too, the Geth won't stand a chance." Grunt jumped a bit and slammed his fists together in the way Krogan did when welcoming the idea of combat.

Shepard took a moment to realize what this meant; either she send them both reassuring the safe return of Tali and Six or she was sending another squad member to his death. Considering the loss of _any _of them was something unacceptable, she disregarded the doubts and concerns; this was the best course of action.

"Then you will be going to Haestrom as well," Six shared a quick glance with Grunt in the excitement of the mission to come. "We're intercepting the ship Tali's aboard and following them to the planet. We've got some time but should be there in seven hours tops. I suggest you gather the gear you feel essential for the mission."

"Will do Shepard," Six replied. "Will that be it?"

"That should do it, see you soon." Shepard turned around and walked out of the room.

Six and Grunt turned to face each other before the Spartan spoke.

"Thanks for offering your help in the mission, I really appreciate it."

"Like I said before, everything in that mission was speaking my language, how could I refuse such a chance?"

"Fair point, I guess, but my thanks still go out for your willingness."

"You can thank me when it's over, in the meantime it would be a good idea on both of our parts if we prepare."

"Right," Six finished before walking out of Grunt's room tallying what he needed in his head. When the word "sleep" ringed in his head he felt his tired limbs and his head call for it. He laughed realizing he hadn't actually slept since he came out of cryo-sleep. Sure it wasn't too long ago, but during that time he fought his way off the purgatory, went with Shepard and Miranda to Korlus, fought Grunt to subdue him, and now just spent some time training with him.

Sleep sounded really good right about now, right after he prepared everything else for the mission of course.

* * *

><p>Please understand that the first half of this chapter was a mind-cramping procedure. I did numerous checks to make sure I got the information right on both Halopedia and the Mass Effect Wiki but let me know if I have some of my information wrong.

I understand also that the history is somewhat different between them like in the Halo Universe there were incidents like The Rainforest Wars, or Humans in the Mass Effect Universe colonizing a planet called Shanxi before the discovery of the Relay. Please understand my lack of explaining why they're different in that factor. I am not a god at weaving fiction together but I am doing my best. More will be explained in due time.

In any case, thanks for reading, please let me know what you think. I will keep you all up to date on my current status for the next chapter at my profile page. And I will respond to reviews via private message if you have questions.

3. More Than His Share

**Okay, After much distraction by Game of the Year (Skyrim) I found some time to update. **

I apologize, the beginning is going to be pretty confusing. It should make sense as you keep reading but I'll explain at the bottom.

* * *

><p>Six was looking into the sky trying to find the shape of any ships nearby. The Covenant owned Reach now, it was being glassed and ground forces were on the prowl for any and all survivors on the surface.

The Covenant didn't normally come to ground during a glassing, but Reach was a special case. As Six saw it, the covenant knew Reach was full of Spartans and significant military figures. They were out to make sure they were dead.

This is where it ends doesn't it? _Six _thought _to _himself, _the AI is aboard the _Pillar _of _Autumn _and I'm here, my last missionâ€| complete.

There was something relaxing to him about the idea of knowing he was close to the end. Like his whole life was leading to this moment. He almost considered himself lucky knowing that this was the day, likely within the hour.

But wait, _something _sprung _into _his _head. _Jun and Halsey were heading to CASTLE base. Can I get there? _He _shook _his _head _at _that _thought, _not can, I _will _get there.

_This _resolution _stuck _with _him, _knowing _he _was _far_ â€" _probably _too _far_ â€" _from _CASTLE _base _to _make _it _there _in _time _to _catch _up _with _anybody. _But _he _had _to _try. _He _was _running _in _a _sprint _that _even the fastest of _Spartans _probably _couldn_'t _keep _up, _but _his _legs _didn_'t _even _begin _to _feel _strained _or _weak, it was almost _like _he _could _run like this _forever._

_He kept watch of his surroundings, the thick orange haze made visibility low, but it was also an advantage. He swore he sprinted right by countless number of Covenant that couldn't make him out in

the thick._

In time, he arrived at the familiar site; one of CASTLE's bases numerous secret entrances with deadlock security measures. The system accessed his armor and retrieved the information it wanted before the first set of titanium doors slid open followed by nearly ten others.

He stepped inside the facility with his assault rifle's butt pressed against the front of his shoulder at the ready. When suddenly he heard a noise behind him that he recognized and turned to see what it was.

It was Jorge fully suited up, and was charging at him like Grunt. Six didn't have time to react as Jorge slammed into him before pressing him into the back wall.

Six felt the wind knocked out of him and he tried to yank Jorge's hand from their death grip on his neck. But it was little use; the Spartan-II was much bigger than him and far stronger than he could ever hope to be.

"_Jorge! It's me Six!" He wasn't even going to question how he was here._

"_I know! Did you do it?"_

Six was confused, "Do what?"

"_Make it count! Did you tell them to make it count? Did you make it count?"_

The thought crossed Six's mind, he never actually told the team to make it count literally. But it wasn't needed when they all knew that's what Jorge would have wanted.

"_We completed the mission, the AI is aboard the ship, we did all we could."_

"_But it didn't save Reach," Jorge sounded sad but his grip on Six was just as strong as ever._

"_I'm sorry Jorge, more came after you died destroying the Super-Carrier."_

"_I know." Jorge sounded just like he did when he responded to Auntie Dot when him and Six were on their mission to destroy that Super-Carrier._

Jorge's helmet was coming closer to Six's, the metal would've collided any closer before Jorge spoke up again. "Six, you saw what Halsey called 'Knowledge' correct?"

"_How do you know this? How are you even alive?"_

"_I'm dead Six, now answer my question."_

"_Of course I did," how was he dead when he was right in front of him pinning him to the wall?_

"_Then you know it isn't human, or Covenant. Something ONI didn't really care to tell many Spartan's about."_

"_How is this relevant? How are you here if you're dead?"_

"_That's not important Six! What you need to know is answers."_

"_Answers to what?"_

"_That's what you need to find out."_

"_You're not making sense!"_

Suddenly from behind both of them the ceiling of the bunker began to rip apart, the ceiling was heading into the sky. In its place was the purple aura of a covenant gravity lift.

The aura dissipated as a clear hole now was in its place. Jorge still had Six pinned to the wall, not paying any attention to the face that the carrier above them was revving up it's glassing cannon. In a moment it fired and the bright light blinded Six before his body felt like it was being burned alive.

* * *

><p>"AHHH!" Six sprung up from his bed, all of his armor but his helmet was still on due to its locked-up state. He observed his surroundings to find that he was in his room on the Normandy. The equipment he stockpiled in preparation for the mission was in the back corner neatly organized. The Holographic display of the space outside was turned off while he was asleep and found EDI was booting it back up for him.<p>

"It was a dream." Six concluded, "What was that all about?"

Six knew that dreams was usually the mind compiling information it had gathered or recollected on when awake and sorting it. Which would've explained the absurdity of it, specifically Jorge's appearance in the dream.

Some of the things the projection of Jorge in his dream said to him seemed a bit clearer now. Specifically the part about that thing called 'Knowledge' or the fact that the Spartan-II told him he was dead.

He was right about one-other thing too, Six needed answers. Answers to explain the tie between his universe, and this one.

"Knowledgeâ€¦|" Six muttered, "What was that thing? Better yet, what does it have to do with me at CASTLE base before I ended up here?" Six remembered that projection in his dream; when the gravity lift tore a hole in the bunker. But the glassing cannon never happened, the Covenant deployed ground troops instead.

His mind had just caused him to remember Knowledge by sending him through his last moments on Reach he remembered in a way that definitely didn't happen.

Six laughed realizing the irony of his dream; he had spent all his time previously awake thinking his way into a migraine about the ties between the universes and what not. Now when he found the ability to put it aside and get some sleep, his mind decided to keep thinking on it one way or another.

He checked the time and realized it was about an hour before Shepard wanted him to report on deck. Which was good, with this time he could start his first report to The Illusive Man about his universe, hoping that recalling memories might help him remember anything else that might lead him to some answers.

"Answersâ€¦ just like Jorge saidâ€¦" Six had heard of stories where people had dreams that foretold an event or explained something to somebody, but he didn't think it would ever happen to him. Then again, nearly everything Jorge said was something he already knew.

He got up from the bed and reached for his Data pad. He started up a document and typed away everything he could recall doing his best to write it in a coherent fashion so The Illusive Man could understand.

When he began to run out of things to say, he checked the time and found he still had about fifteen minutes before he needed to be on deck.

He had some questions lingering in his head for one individual; he felt that this was a good of a time as any to ask them.

"_Eedee,_are you there?"

EDI appeared before him in a flash, her appearance as always was the dotted water tower resembling shape with a blue ring suspended in midair around it.

As she spoke, the vertical aligning bars expanded, "Hello Six, what can I help you with?"

The synthesize voice was like music to his ears, remembering all of the AI that he had listened to over the years.

"I'd like to know what makes you tick, my universe had AI as well but they were much different from you."

"I am a Quantum Blue Box AI that functions as the electronic warfare defense for the Normandy. I'm rather restricted in exactly what I can do, Rogue AI have been understandably considered a danger."

"But like, do you have a personality? What makes you distinct from any other AI?"

"A personality, in the basic sense I do yes. But I am restricted from delving deeper into that. People fear it when artificial intelligence come to be as complex as them."

Six leaned back a bit on the bed, grunting a little. When something he didn't expect happened.

"If you don't mind my asking, what were AI like in your

universe?"

That sparked something for Six, EDI was curious. She had a desire to understand something she didn't know. The love of information was something all AI back in the UNSC shared; guess this was something they had in common.

"Well at first AI were limited themselves, but only because of technological limitations. At first they were nothing more than text on a computer screen relaying their opinions and offering their assistance when they could. But as time moved on, they found ways to calculate the needed functions and create their own voice. Not a synthesized voice like yours â€" no offense."

"None taken,"

"But like a real voice, it's extremely taxing on their calculation but it was something that was leading them to be more accepted by mankind."

Six took a breath before continuing, "Then they found out how to make a holographic projection kind of like what you're doing, but on a whole new level. I'm assuming other AI of your type all have the same holographic projection right?"

"You'd be correct, unless it was modified by the owner of the AI in question."

"Well then, AI in the UNSC created themselves an avatar. Some took up a personality from history â€" like General Patton from World War Two â€" resembling everything like them, others created their own projection entirely. Through this, the uncanny valley was crossed and people came to trust AI. They're an essential part of the everyday UNSC life."

"And they're not worried about an AI going rabid?" EDI sounded like she was definitely fascinated by what Six was telling her.

"There are risks yes, but even AI fear the idea of turning rogue. The few cases they have, other AI come in to contain them before they are deleted, some AI even delete themselves knowing when they have crossed the line. It's been an issue with AI since they developed their Avatar's and personalized voices, a lot of the issues come from their longing to be truly alive."

"Funny that you mention that, considering a similar problem is what caused the Geth to go against the Quarians."

Six remembered reading up on the articles about the Geth and the Quarians. How the Quarians panicked and began to attack the Geth when one asked them if it was alive.

"If only they took the time to understand, the Geth were only curious. They have no desire to be anything more than synthetic, but the very advancements the Quarian's gave them was allowing them to wonder exactly what they were." EDI concluded.

Suddenly, a flash of white appeared over EDI's projection followed by lines of text.

"Shepard requires you and Grunt on the bridge."

* * *

><p>Shepard was in her combat suit with her helmet on her hip. She leaned a bit on Joker's chair as the two had a good view of the planet Haestrom. It's yellow and brown surface didn't make it look all that much attractive place. Like someone had just dumped all of the galaxies toxic waste onto it. Considering it was inhabited by the Quarians and then the Geth, that assumption may not have been that far off. She couldn't imagine the Quarians caring much about the environment when they always had their selves busy with some machinery.<p>

EDI appeared in her spot in the cockpit as she spoke, "I had made contact with the Quarian vessel; the Car'voia. A line is open to them for you to speak."

Shepard accessed her omni-tool and spoke into it, "Normandy to Car'voia, come in Car'voia."

It was a moment before a familiar voice came over the other end, "Normandy? Shepard? Is that you?"

As Tali's voice came in, Shepard heard the footsteps of the Spartan and the Krogan approaching.

"It is Tali, I have some things to explain to you."

Tali's tone definitely expressed that she didn't believe Shepard was on the other end, "Okay, Shepard. I'm listening."

"I have a certain member on my team that requires your technical expertise so I really could use you on the Normandy. However, I understand you've got a job to do here on Haestrom. Considering how long your job takes; I really can't afford to stay." She made she said I instead of we so Tali didn't get the feeling she was apart of Cerberus like she did when they met before on Freedom's Progress.

"Shepard you know I can't leave,"

"I don't expect you to, so instead, I wanted to make sure you survived it. I'm sending two members' of my squad to lend you and your team a hand. Hopefully you can come with us after this is over."

"You'd do that? Are you sure? What if they die down here?" She legitimately sounded worried

"I've taken that into consideration Tali, but you're worth it. And don't worry, they can handle themselves, trust me."

A moment of silence before Tali came through again, "thanks Shepard, I was a little worried about the odds of survival on this mission. I'll tell my team what's going on, I'll make sure they won't have any issues with it."

"Great Tali, I'll come down briefly to make sure we're clear on everything."

Shepard cut the line as she turned to Six and Grunt who stood behind her. Grunt had the biggest grin on his face as the anticipation of the fights to come excited him greatly. Six was completely anonymous in his suit, so Shepard had no clue what he was thinking.

Shepard broke the silence between them, "Of all people on this ship I think you two would be best for this kind of mission. But I hope you can understand my concern still, neither of you have fought the Geth and they control the planet. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't a non-stop firefight."

The Spartan remembered something Noble Team leader Carter said on their last mission. "Wouldn't be a Noble Mission if it were easy, Commander."

Shepard laughed under her breath admiring Six's calm attitude in the midst of such uncertainty. She turned her head to look at the back of Joker's hat before saying, "Joker, take us in." Shepard beckoned to Grunt and Six to follow her.

"Already am," he shouted back to her as the three walked further away.

* * *

><p>The drop ship felt like the inside of a microwave. Beads of sweat formed on Shepard face and her skin felt cooked despite the face she had her helmet on and sealed up her armor.<p>

Haestrom's dying sun was spilling radiation, and despite the drop ship's protective layers it didn't stop some of the sweltering heat from getting through or some nasty rays from that god-forsaken star.

If either Six or Grunt was feeling the heat neither gave any sign of it. Shepard made sure she kept up the same kind of stone-cold demeanor they had to not show weakness. She didn't want them to worry (she knew at least Six would) nor did she want to appear weak.

When the drop ship touched down, it landed in the shade of a massive stone column, Shepard got up and waited a brief second before the hatch opened and allowed her, Six, and Grunt out.

Stepping out, the commander took in the scene in front of her. It was a construction site full of the same kind of stone they were in the shade of. Catwalks and lots of construction equipment were scattered everywhere. It was like they were in the middle of a quarry yard that someone was making into a facility forâ€| whatever reason.

But this wasn't about the scenery, what was important was the band of Quarians standing in front of her with one specifically that caught her eye.

"Shepard, welcome the Haestrom." She greeted with a hint of sarcasm.

"Nice to see you again Tali, I wish I had time for a tour," she joked to the Quarian.

Tali looked towards Six and Grunt that were now standing to both sides of her, "So these are them?"

"Sure are, this is Six, and that's Grunt."

"Six, and Grunt? Those are names?"

"I'll choose to ignore that," the Krogan interjected.

Shepard took a second before she responded, "Names aren't exactly important, besides, makes them easy to remember."

"Got a point there,"

Shepard hated having to cut this conversation short, "Look, I'd love to stay and talk Tali but I really have to get going. Six can explain everything that you want to know. He's the reason I need you."

Tali nodded, "I understand Shepard, and thank you."

Shepard turned around and spoke just before she hopped into the dropship, "See you all soon."

After the hatch closed and the drop ship took off, Tali looked to the two individuals in front of her left a little dumbfounded at whom they were.

The Spartan broke the silence, "I guess a more formal introduction is in order. SPARTAN _bee-three-twelve_ at your service." Shepard reached out a hand for a handshake.

Tali was a little intimidated by the fully-armored soldier and the Krogan standing side-by-side but she respected the gesture and shook Six's firm hand.

"And Grunt is?"

Six took a glance at his friend and noticed he didn't seem to have much interest in introducing himself to the Quarian. The Lieutenant took it in stride to do it himself.

"He's a tank bred, created by the Krogan Warlord Okeer on Korlus. He first woke up about a day ago. And when it comes to combat, he's worth his salt. Probably more."

"Worth his salt?" Tali never heard the human figure of speech.

"Oh," the Spartan was taken aback, "It's a saying, basically, he's tough."

"â€| Alrightâ€|" Tali was starting to realize their situation was rather awkward. Introduced briefly by one of her very best friends, to then leave these two very unknown individuals with her and the other Quarians.

Six fortunately had more to say, "I have some things I need to explain to you like Shepard said. But for now, where might we unpack our things and be ready for upcoming Geth attacks?"

"You can be right with the rest of us," Another voice from behind

Tali was heard. Six and Grunt noticed that it was the voice of an approaching Quarian marine; donned in a red suit with purple haze through its visor. He had a missile launcher in hand resting on his shoulder.

"Names Kal'Reegar, I don't want any kind of tension or hostilities between us during our time here so it's best we all get acquainted well enough. So like I said, you'll be right with the rest of us."

"Thank you sir," Six bowed slightly as an act of respect, "obviously the next question to ask is when should we expect the first Geth attack?"

"Soon, motion trackers have detected about four drop ships inbound, at the rate they're going we've got ten minutes at most."

"Well, let's not waste time then," Grunt's booming voice declared.

"Certainly, let me show you where we're camped."

The Quarian Marines were much disciplined it seemed as they offered to help both Six and Grunt with their gear. There were around twenty to thirty of them from what Six could tell and for the most part, they reminded him of the time when working with ODSTs. They respected him, but they might taunt him from time to time like when _The__Bullfrogs _asked Six to _try_ to keep up with them.

Seven minutes passed by quickly and the sound of distant Geth drop ship humming could be heard.

Kal yelled out, "They're here, everyone get to positions!"

Six whipped out his Mattock assault rifle and got behind a concrete block in the shade of a catwalk. Grunt took cover right beside him. Both of them aimed down the sights of their guns, keeping track of the position to the first drop ship.

"Ready Six?" Grunt spoke just loud enough for him to hear.

"Yes,"

"Say the words please,"

The Spartan immediately was taken back to Halsey as she handed him over the AI. He laughed on the inside to the sheer coincidence.

He smiled as he said "I'm ready."

The first drop ship lowered to the ground and released a whole mess of Geth Infantry.

"OPEN FIRE!"

The entire company began unloading and filled the air with streaks of blue, red, and white light. Geth shields dropped and their skeletons were torn apart. Soon the first mess of Geth was half gone before the rest had taken to cover and screeched in their language communicating

to one another. The marines continued to lay down the pressure but soon found that the second drop ship was deploying.

Six pulled a grenade from his belt, pulled it's pin and made a toss only a Spartan could make as it flew roughly forty to fifty feet before landing at the foot of a Geth. The charge exploded in a sea of fire and obliterated roughly nine mobile platforms.

"SIX, DUCK!" Grunt ordered, Six didn't question his motives as he ducked his head.

Behind Six, was a towering and invisible mobile platform that only gave away it's position by the blue light emanating from it's single eye. Grunt threw a curled up fish right towards the socket. The shield vaporized before him and he smashed its head inward.

Six turned around to face it from his crouched position. He chose to hit its right leg with the butt of his rifle causing the large synthetic to fall.

"We got more!" Grunt spotted two regular-sized geth were approaching their barrier. Then an idea struck Six.

"Grunt! Help me out!"

The two Geth approaching noticed the Krogan and the other they suspected of being a Quarian had disappeared but they continued to advance. But their sensory systems went crazy when they saw them again holding the "corpse" of their larger brethren. The two specimens not very far away from them now tossed it right at them, calculating the distance and available time to react, neither of the Geth had the chance to evade as the wreck smashed into them.

The two last drop ships were close now, the firefight still raged just as heavily as it began. Six mentally marked the position of five Geth he could get a beat on before he entered a certain zen state Spartans could do.

Aiming down the sights, he targeted the farthest one to the left and struck it down with a clear headshot. He turned making the mental calculations in his head on how far the next was from the one he just dropped and popped a round into it. He then jolted to the position of the third and dropped it, then the fourth, and waited for the fifth to pop up from cover before he capped it as well.

Though their numbers were dwindling, the Geth on the ground were still numerous and the last two drop ships were coming in fast. The first dropped another mess of Geth both big and small, the other deployed something much more fierce.

"Colossus!" One of the Marines cried out.

"Perfect!" Grunt had a smile as big as he was. He had already been thrilled through this entire fight, now this one would finish strong.

Kal'Reegar sensed that both Six and Grunt were planning to do, he tapped his radio and buzzed to them.

"Six, Grunt, we'll take care of the infantry, you find a way to down

that Colossus!"

"Understood!" Six replied.

"What's the plan?" Grunt yelled loud enough for Six to hear.

"There's no way we can just charge it head on, we need an angle."

Grunt looked to him and pointed to their right, "What about that?"

Six followed Grunt's finger to see he was pointing at a crane, the crane's arm loomed almost right over the mech's position. There was no heavy object it was holding up, but that wasn't what was important.

The Lieutenant had figured out what the Krogan had in mind, "Okay, wait right here, back me up when it happens."

"You know I will," Grunt nodded before Six turned and bolted towards the crane. His shield glowed as he took some shots despite Grunt's cover fire. He ran up a set of stairs and made it to the crane. He immediately found a spot to place his hands before lifting himself off the ground. He scaled the side of the machinery until he was on top of it, his shield dropping slowly from the intense rays of the dying sun. From his position, he saw the extent of the crane's arm and the little over dozen Geth ground troops that were left with the Colossus wide open but seemingly appearing like an unstoppable force that didn't give a crap how much damage it took.

Six took a deep breath before he unharnessed his scimitar shotgun. He then sprinted at full force up the arm of the crane not giving the Geth any time to formulate what he was doing.

The tension in his veins was palpable, falling into a rhythm as his boots banged against the metal surface of the crane, his shield dropping to critical as the sun beat down on him. The Colossus had picked up on what he was doing and began to back away with its eye turned towards him.

Six didn't stop though; as he jumped into the air, time seemed to have slowed down. The Colossus was revving up a blast right at the Spartan. But Six lifted his shotgun and with one hand he fired at the eye in this midair state. Some of the buckshot had impacted and cut through the weakened shield from Quarian rocket fire. The Noble then reached for the metal neck of the massive Geth as he got a grip on it. He then clung to the neck with both arms and slid down it until he was atop of its smooth circular back.

Six took the scimitar shotgun and shoved it up against the back of the autonomous robots neck before he unloaded the entire clip. With the shield already down, the point-blank fire punched a hole through it's plating. The robot began to stagger as its vital circuitry was being torn apart.

With the biggest threat to the Quarian Marines more or less incapacitated, they started downing the remaining Geth.

Six noticed that Grunt was coming fast. With the Claymore shotgun's barrel in his hands, he took a hard swing at the head with the back end of the shotgun. The sheer force of the swing dislocated the robot of not only its head but its entire neck as it flung through the air and smashed into a Geth behind them that had taken position behind cover until just then.

At that moment the massive hunk of metal fell to the ground with a clang. Six lost his equilibrium on the sudden drop and landed on his tail end sliding down the robot landing his feet on the ground.

Then, an eerie noise coming from the Geth could be heard.

"Oh hell!" Six bolted with Grunt as fast as they could away from the Colossus and jumped to the ground as it detonated, enveloping the very air around it in flame and sending shrapnel in all directions.

A few moments of dead silence, before the sound of cheering from the marines came. Six felt his muscles ache as his body relaxed from the rush. He wasn't sore by any means, but the firefight had taken a bit out of him.

"Good job Six," The Krogan said as he lifted himself up and offered a hand to the Spartan.

Six reached for Grunt's hand before he was helped up off the ground.

"Thanks, but this is just the beginning."

"I know," Grunt had helped Six to his feet before letting go of his hand. "And I can't wait for whatever comes next."

* * *

><p>Alright that beginning dream segment was basically me trying to avoid the overused vision from a dream thing. Instead of like an actual vision, Six's dream was intended to actually relapse on things that had crossed his mind during the day like how your dreams sometimes do to as your brain sorts itself out. Such as Jorge charging and pinning Six up against the wall was not because of Jorge but something that Grunt did that happened to be in his dream. The same goes with the gravity lift tearing a hole in CASTLE base's ceiling.

Anyway, please review. I really like to know what you guys think. Have any questions I will gladly respond to you in a PM as I've been doing. For news on what I'm working on next (possibly next chapter) check my profile page as I have a dedicated section to list where I am on the next one.

Thank you GodzillaMaster on correcting me that it was Colossus rather than Colossal.

And of course, thanks for reading.

Sorry for such a delay guys. Christmas break made me a very lazy person. I got my PC rig built which I really could use some help in introducing on how to mod Oblivion. It's all new to me and I can't seem to get anything to work besides the Unofficial Oblivion Patch.

Also, I just want to say I really appreciate all the feedback I've gotten on this again. The sheer amount of responses is humbling.

Okay so back on topic. A bit of a heads up on this chapter, I apologize if anyone has a problem with it, but I created a Geth design for this chapter. I just needed _something_ more opposing than a Collossus. So I took some liberties on that. But enough of me wasting your time. Please, read.

* * *

><p>If the blasted sun wasn't already a pounding headache as it was (or being the one to give that to everybody) the inside of Six's helmet was hot enough to cook a breakfast worthy of a Krogan atop of.<p>

He had just walked inside one of the Quarian holdouts that dotted the site the Marines and Tali had set up shop at. It was like someone had thrown a bunch of quarry blocks atop one another and laid down some wires and machinery and called it home. It was dark in many areas as well, which was probably for the best considering how it burned to be outside, especially in the sun.

Six detached his helmet and took a deep breath of air. He had been granted some respite after fighting against the Geth for a good fifteen hours now off and on.

Originally, when Kal'Reegar had offered the Spartan some time to collect himself he refused. Six had this growing paranoia that at any minute now the attacks would intensify in both numbers and rate. But from what he could tell from the firefights they encountered so far is that the Geth weren't actually coordinated an offensive yet. More like they were throwing everything at them as fast as possible, given their location in accordance to where they'd been holed up.

Fortunately, Kal and the other marines had a plan for that. They had brought along with them a good mess of automated anti-air turrets. Unfortunately, due to the size of their ship the turrets had to be dissembled to all fit in the confined space aboard the Car'voia. On the other hand, Quarians are natural machinist, mechanics, and the like. So reassembling the defenses was going along nicely.

That didn't do much to put the stressed Lieutenant's mind at ease. Spartans weren't meant for defense, as Frederic-104 once told him on an operation he had the pleasure of partaking in "Spartans aren't designed to be holed up in a bunker taking heat, we're the ones that should be bringing the heat to them." Nonetheless, Six knew the importance of his current objective and would never find the reason or the rationale to complainâ€¦ ever.

He dropped his helmet to the floor before he leaned up against one of

the stark gray walls or concrete slab. He slid down until his hindquarters were against the rocky stone flooring very much like the wall. As a matter of fact exactly like the wall.

"Hey, umm, Six is it?" a semi-tuned voice of a Quarian female could be heard to his right. Six looked over to see the asset, Tali'Zorah held a bottle in her rightâ€| claw? She stared at him with a quizzical look that wasn't quite noticeable by the white silhouette of her eyes through the veil of purple haze.

His response let her know she was right, "care for a drink?"

Six smiled slightly seeing the bottle of sure relief in front of him. "It's water right? Water I can drink?"

"Yes, it's sterilized, and has your name on it. Or number really." She couldn't honestly believe this guy was referred to with such an odd alias.

"I appreciate that Tali, thank you." He extended a hand reaching for the bottle as Tali handed it to him. Six then popped it open and took small sips knowing it was more thirst quenching than downing the whole bottle at once.

For a moment, Tali stood awkwardly not sure what to do next. Six sensed what she was thinking and offered, "Tali, if you want to sit down and just relax that'd be fine. I suppose you have some questions for me? Unless there's something you should be doing."

"Oh, yes, well the current scans we're running are going to be a while so I guess I have time." Tali walked over another step towards Six and sat down next to him.

Six took another sip from his water (that couldn't have tasted better right now) before he opened his mouth, "So, let's hear it."

The Quarian took a short breath before speaking up, "right, ummâ€| well why are you called Six?" she found this question to be as good of a jumping-off point as any.

Before the Lieutenant opened his mouth he made a mental note to watch his words. This really wasn't a time to tell anybody here who he really was considering no one was likely to believe him. Now that he thought about it, it was a miracle that Shepard didn't believe he was something out of an insane asylum placed on the Purgatory for the sake of the galaxy's well-being.

So he would choose his words carefully, "I was apart of a special force called Noble Team. I was Noble Six. In our last mission, all but me and Noble Three I can speak for being dead carrying out that mission."

"Ohâ€| my, I'm sorry to have brought that up, must be painful to think about."

"Its fine really, you didn't know and it was a while ago."

A moment of silence hung in the air before the mechanic continued, "Soâ€| why keep the name? Or the alias I mean."

Six took a draft of the water from the bottle before he answered, "Just a matter of respect mostly, we were out fighting for a good cause. They gave their lives trying to carry it out. The least I can do is keep a part of my time with them with me, even if it is just something as simple as a number."

"Well, what did you do exactly?"

"Well honestly Tali, I'd really rather not get into that, maybe after this mission is over?"

"Ohâ€¦ ummâ€¦ okay," She didn't really expect to not get the answer considering how open he was before about all of this.

Six saw the unease her minor but identifiable amounts of body language was giving off. So the man sought to get the conversation rolling again, "Anything else you'd like to know?"

"â€¦ Yes actually. What is it that Shepard needs me for so much that she sent you andâ€¦"

"Grunt,"

"And Shepard said that'd be easy to remember. Anyway, what is so important that she sent you two for?"

"Well it's a matter actually of what my legacy â€" Noble Team â€" knew. We kept ourselves - and the teams like us â€" â€¦ distant from the rest of the galaxy's technology. My suit has all this information stored away, but due to a fry in my systems not too long ago it's on lockdown."

"Lockdown, that's kind of a rare function to have in a suit."

"Yes, well we felt it necessary to have a system in check to make sure someone didn't steal any of the information. Thing is, the lockdown was also supposed to make my suit explode. I don't know what hit it but I think that system got fried or just un-triggered. That's where you come in, no one else know how the tech in my suit was built, at least those that are still alive. So we're looking to you for help."

"And by we, you mean Cerberus," Tali remarked with disgust.

Six took another gulp of his water down, "I heard there was bad blood between the two of you. I'll just say now that while I regret that there is, I have nothing to do with it."

"Yes but, do you trust Cerberus, or obey the Illusive Man?" Tali was being rather persistent.

The Spartan took a deep breath before continuing, "Listen Tali, I hardly knew what Cerberus was. Noble team operated in a very isolated part of the galaxy. All I know is that Shepard got resurrected by them and I'm working under Shepard. Shepard doesn't trust them and I respect Shepard's judgment. But I don't know them well enough to honestly hold a grudge either. I hope you can respect that."

The mechanic was quiet for a little while before she sighed and said, "Alright, guess I can understand that. Though I have to admit, your

story is sounding rather odd about Noble Team and all."

"Again, I can take the time to explain it once we get done here and on the Normandy. For now, you'll just have to trust me."

"Sure anyway about this lockdown thing you were saying?"

"Right, well besides the fact that I can't access the information stored away in my suit, I'm afraid of taking off anything but my helmet in fear of triggering the explosion function in some way. All I can access is my heads up display and energy shield. Anyway, that leads us right back to where you come in. Because of this, we found it best for both Grunt and I to ensure your survival. And while we're at it, the survival of your fellow Quarians."

"Sorry I don't mean to sound like I wasn't listening, but would you mind if I saw your helmet?" Tali pointed to it with one digit, "perhaps I can get a grasp on it now?"

"I'd prefer if you didn't mess with it really but," The Lieutenant reached for his helmet lying on his left as he passed it over to Tali, "there you go. Just keep it in one piece for now."

"Sure thing," She shifted the gear in her hands as if looking at every inch of it would determine something for her. Something concealed. And every move she made with it showed a level of curiosity but at the same time, respect for the hardware.

As the Spartan observed her for a little while in her actions, she took him back to times in the UNSC where he made conversation (always professional of course) with many beautiful women enlisted or as an officer. Knowing his place, he had never lead on to anything to them and would never dare to dream of anything more. However, he did sometimes spare himself a few glances. He may have been a Spartan, but a part of him was still very much human.

He was in a way hating himself for looking at Tali in that kind of way right now. She was an alien, she had clawed feet and hands but everything else said "human." It didn't hurt that her entirety was covered in a form-fitting suit that emphasized her hourglass waist. If she was a human, she would be considered healthy.

After that he pulled away his eyes and just looked out into the room. Considering his history with aliens, it was a big surprise he didn't gun down every single one he saw. But there were obviously so many things that set aliens in this universe apart from the one he called home.

Tali began to stand up handing him his helmet back, "Well it was nice chatting with you Six, but I best be going now." She looked down at him, nodding to each other before she casually walked off.

Six just then took this time to lean his head back up against the wall and let his body relax. It felt good to be on the break that Kal practically forced him into. With a chilled bottle of cold water, a nice conversation with some good company and a rather dark and cool place to just let his joints and muscles loosen the energy gradually returned to him.

He didn't know how much later it was when he heard the footsteps surely belonging to a Quarian were coming down the hall at a rather hastened pace. The Noble opened his droopy eyes to see it was Kal, shaking himself awake as the Quarian approached.

"Sorry Six but we've got trouble inbound, and lots of it." Kal held a M-15 Vindicator Assault rifle in his hands, he removed his right hand from the equation as he reached out to give the Spartan some assistance in getting off the floor.

"What kind of trouble?" Six dropped his helmet back over himself as it sealed in place reconnecting with the rest of his armor. The HUD started coming online as numbers and symbols flashed before him indicating something about the systems he never took the time to understand himself. But as his shield, health, ammo count, motion sensor, and the works came online he felt satisfied and in a way safe knowing it all still worked just as it should.

"We've got Geth inbound, lots of them."

"Any ship count?" Six grabbed his M-96 Mattock Assault Rifle and Scimitar Shotgun, the two began heading down the hallway going outside.

"Sensors indicated about seven drop ships; even worse, our sensors were being screwy with us for the last half hour. We just got them working again, and the ships are seven minutes out."

Six didn't respond, but Kal continued, "but it gets worse, thing is, The Geth are bringing along something they don't use that often, a Walker."

"Walker?"

"It's a twenty-foot tall 2 legged Geth with some pretty heavy guns atop of it. I didn't think they'd try to use them in such a cramped space. It's one of the reasons we chose this location to set up at. Either they're getting desperate, or they just don't care. Considering it's the Geth, it's safe to assume the latter."

"How much firepower would it take to bring one of these things down?"

The two approached the end of the hallway, Kal reached over to the door panel and "They've got shield strength that's built to take a serious beating. I've honestly never seen one that wasn't taken down by luring it into a trap. Problem is, they're not easy to trick either."

Six looked around the site and pondered for a moment. There were some options he was considering, wondering at the moment if the same trick would work on the Geth twice by jumping the crane. But given the description of the Walker, that approach didn't sound viable.

"So this thing is being deployed by a drop ship? We could just focus _Ay-Ay _fire on that ship."

"Problem is it ain't coming in by Ship, it's climbing over the dig site in this area as we speak."

The Noble's chest sank a little bit finding his options being stripped away before him as the clock ticked onward towards the arrival of the next attack. That's about when his eye fell onto a massive stone block just standing upright. The thought sprang to his head on what he should do.

"Kal, I hope you have some drilling tools."

"Plenty, what have you got in mind?"

The Lieutenant pointed at the nearly thirty-foot tall block of stone, "If we can drill a hole in that, we can conceal some explosives inside. Lure the Walker into place and crush it flat."

Kal took a second to register it, "Sounds like our best shot. Let's hop to it, and fast."

* * *

><p>Six found a comfortable position on top of a raised platform, he lay prone with his Mattock in hands, and he had added a bipod to it, not satisfied with the slowness of a sniper rifle considering the sheer amount of synthetics they'd soon be up against.<p>

The plan â€" as he relayed earlier to Kal â€" was quite simple. Once the Walker shows up, lure it into position, detonate the charges concealed within the block and make a timber that would even give Yogi Bear a run for his money.

But while the plan may be simple, the execution of it would prove difficult. This was going to be the most amount of Geth they would've fought so far at once.

Speaking of which, the sounds of Drop ship engines was humming in everyone's ears. They were here ready or not.

The two AA's setup and functioning began taking shots bringing down the first one before it could land. Behind it however was three more which quickly dispatched their Geth by dispersal pods not even needing to land. Marines ducked and rolled out of the way as some came falling in their direction. Six took aim at the first one he saw and used his reflex trigger finger and accuracy to pop three shots at the 'head' of a standard synthetic. The shields flared up and dissipated in the first two shots followed by the third puncturing the very eye of the unit as it dropped like a rock.

The sheer numbers of the machines was enough to strike some serious fear into the hearts of the Quarrians. Grunt however was not a Quarrian, and although he didn't have Six at his side he could see that the human was offering him plenty of fire support as he fought his battle the Krogan way; charging head on.

His first target was a much larger red Geth that was currently in the sunlight. Grunt charged him with the Claymore in hand. He shot the autonomous robot taking out it's shield before he kicked it hard in the chest sending it back staggering. Its head lowered just enough to use the armored barrel of his shotgun as a club smashing the circuitry of the unit into oblivion.

Grunt then saw two standard Geth behind the same barrier, he launch a

concussive shot to disarray the pair before he stowed his shotgun leaving open for a two-handed vault over the barrier that freed up his feet to kick them both back. He stomped on both in a rage that came so natural to the Krogan, leaving them both for scrap.

In this time the other three drop ships had arrived dropping their forces. One of the automated anti-airs had taken out one of the aircraft at a convenient time over the site. Unfortunately for Six, he could see it's trajectory was heading right for his position.

Six got to his feet in a flash and noticed the Quarian behind him that hadn't taken notice of the impending death as he shot at a synthetic's cover. Six extended an arm out and grabbed him with his superior strength tucking the surprise alien to his side like a Quarterback with a football. With the Marine in hand he jumped off the platform just before the drop ship impacted behind them. The drop was eight feet and with the Quarian in his grasp he couldn't roll when he hit the ground to absorb some of the impact. Rather he did his best to hit the ground running to absorb some of the impact. His leg's still felt a massive jolt in the reverberation. He stopped running as soon as the shock went away and then took the alien still at his side and positioned him upright.

"Thank you Six, I had no idea."

"That's why I grabbed you, c'mon let's not waste time though." Six already grabbed his Mattock from it's sling and rejoined the fight, the Quarian joined in with him.

Kal buzzed over the radio, "We got men down, I repeat, Har'ree and Fotar are down."

Another Quarian buzzed in, "Are they wounded, can we get to them?"

"No, they're gone."

The silence over the radio that followed was almost punctual in a way. Going from bad to worse, the sound of a massive synthesized roar could be heard in the distance followed by the shaking ground beneath them as the mech took a step.

"The Walker is approaching the vicinity! We need to take out as many of these Geth as we can before it gets here or we're going to be in some real trouble!"

Grunt and Six were already working on such, as they felt another step from the massive machine rock the infrastructure as it clear. The Spartan took point to provide support to the Krogan out on the field still engaged in close quarters combat. He didn't care about conserving ammo now as he pulled the trigger like a cowboy. Unleashing as many rounds without any hesitation out to put down the synthetics as fast as possible no matter how many rounds it took.

Another synthesized roar and it was apparent the Walker was right on top of them now. Six took his eyes out of the Mattock's scope and peered around to find his eyes landing on something far more than he imagined.

The Walker was simple in design. It had two legs that were clawed to scale over many surfaces and bent in the middle. Its head rested about 9/10th the way up the legs rather than on top of them giving it some overhead.

Its head was like an oval with a snout, on the snout rested two twin hulking canons. Its surface like most Geth was a glossy white with black appearing from exposed circuitry and the like.

It first took notice of Kal because of the missile launcher he had in hand as he stood atop a catwalk overpass that led from the crane to the far canyon wall where Six had been earlier

"Oh shit," Kal sensing what was about to happen quickly turned around to jump off the side.

The Walker took its first shot, two massive red beams of energy firing one right after the other at the overpass. Kal just missed the blast radius and rolled as he hit the ground to absorb some of the impact.

The Walker seemed very pleased about its superior positioning at the opposite end of the site above the rest, having a perfect bird's eye view of them all.

_No, we have to get it lured into the trap, _Six smashed his hand into the button to relay over the radio. "Everyone! Target its feet with everything you got!" Hoping this would somehow lure it down not having had the time or thought process earlier to plan for this scenario.

The Walker didn't move for a little longer, it took a shot at some of the other Quarrians whose cover was blown away and their vital signs listed them unconscious. The Spartan ran out and provided cover fire downing more of the infantry Geth before hauling the two marines back to safety.

One Geth in particular had seen the indication in the local network that the Walker was climbing down into the site. It stepped to the side as the hulk of a machine took its place on the ground, firing off more rounds at the Quarrian force.

In the Geth's viewfinder, he spotted a distinct individual in armor unlike the rest, this very person had just shot a few blasts at it and staggered it on the left side of the head reeling it off to the right.

The Geth regained its balance by catching itself with two hands on the side of a massive stone block. It's sensor's spotted something out of the ordinary; a freshly drilled hole with a little red light flashing deep within. It reached an arm in for the device realizing as it pulled it out what exactly he was looking at.

Six had just realized what was going on, "Oh snap!"

The Geth sent out a code alerting the other Geth of the situation. The Walker was just about to step back.

Six smashed on his Radio, "Grunt! Make sure that thing doesn't move, now!"

Grunt without responding back suddenly dropped his fight with other Geth and charged the Walker's legs. He stood between the two of them, limbs stretched as he held them from moving. The Quarrians offered cover fire, grasping how dire the situation had just become.

Six popped a round to down the Geth that had grabbed the charge (which had tried to run away from the fight with it to avoid the hazard). He then charged the position, shooting Geth that got in his way. His shields " and Grunts too " taking a serious pounding despite the cover fire.

Grunt felt his arms ache in agony as the Walker fought against his grip. But failure couldn't be an option. His arms felt like they were about to be ripped from his body as the machine's horsepower worked against him. He applied more of his own force to counter, the two in a constant battle.

Six saw the charge had been dropped a little ways off, he vaulted over some cover and kept his head low as Geth Plasma flew over his head. He slid down and snagged the charge off the ground. His backside was to the earth, still holding the Mattock in his right hand and the charge in the left. He pointed the Mattock at a Geth who was giving him trouble and popped it in the head. Getting to his feet, he took the charge in his left hand and angle his throwing arm to pitch it into the hole once again. Whipping out the detonator from his belt, he signaled to Grunt who immediately let go of the Walker, yelling out in pain for a moment before they both ran back to the Marines.

Six wasted no time as he hit the switch. The blast from the charge took away a grunt chunk of one side of the block. It swayed towards the Walker breaking the rest of its restraints on the way; giving into the swaying and fell forward.

The stone tower crushing the Walker was truly a sight to be held, and when it hit the ground the sheer BANG noise was so loud Six could've sworn his ears were permanently damaged to some degree. The dust kicked up blocking the view of the other Geth still on the site. Not knowing how many were left or how many might've hopefully been under the stone now.

Six turned his attention to his friend, who had his hands on his knees panting heavily. He noticed the Spartan was paying him some care as he put a hand on his shoulder.

"You okay Grunt?"

It would do no good to say he felt weak; then again, he didn't feel the energy to virtually do anything. He just stood there breathing heavily.

"Keep your fingers on the trigger boys, we're not done yet!" Kal ordered out. Six whipped out his Scimitar Shotgun from its sling before he looked at the hunched-over Krogan.

"Sit the rest of the battle out, we got this." He just knew that despite Grunt's pride, even he would agree to this as he nodded to Six.

* * *

><p>Five minutes later, Six was standing over the battlefield picking up weapons and thermal clips where he could find them. Geth 'corpses' were being tossed off the edge of the cliff. The only thing being truly spared from them was Walker. It was a rare opportunity to get a hold of parts from such a machine, so Tali was actually inspecting the parts herself and seeing what was there that she hadn't already seen.<p>

Six took a seat next to Grunt carrying a jug of water in his right hand as the Krogan looked at him. Six nodded and Grunt took the jug from him silently thanking him with a nod of his own.

"Great work Grunt, I have no idea what we would've done if you hadn't been there."

Grunt laughed in his hoarse tone, "I'll be honest, I may be the perfect Krogan but you can't argue against a machines torque. A little bit longer and my limbs might as well ripped from my body."

Six bumped him on the shoulder, "But you're strong Grunt, be proud of that."

"Believe me, I am."

The pair sat in silence for a little bit when Kal approached them and took a seat next to Six when he offered.

"Do we know when the next round is coming?"

"Nope, but we're not sticking around as is."

Both the Spartan and the Krogan shot a glance at the Quarian confused by his words.

"What?"

"We're leaving this position, traveling underground for a while. We don't want the Geth to have a total fix on where we are so we're going to relocate for a few standard cycles."

"So we're running?" Grunt interjected. He fully understood the reasoning for the move but the core concept remained true. He took a few gulps from his jug as finished saying that.

Kal took it in stride and responded, "True Grunt, but after that Walker I'd hate to see us try to fair against any more of them. Or if something somehow _worse _shows its ugly head. We're going to run out of tricks soon enough."

The three shared a very brief laugh over that, Six was curious about the moving prospect so he took this time to ask away.

"We have the AA's set up and it'd be dumb to leave them here, on top of that how are we going to get our excess gear around?"

"Don't worry about that, we brought carts from the Car'voia to load all of that in. And all of the tunnels in this area are simple

rectangular fashion with ramps. It'll be easy to get the goods around."

"Works for me, I could use a break from this blasted sun anyway."

"I'm surprised you haven't come down with that human illness, what was it calledâ€¦| ummâ€¦| Cancer?"

Six shot him a glance through his helmet, _'all of this technology at their disposal and the Human race still dealing with that in this Universe? They hadn't just fixed that with some gene therapy? _"Well, I've been fortunate not to." Six lied in the figurative sense.

"Well," Kal hoisted himself up off the ground, "We'll be packing up in thirty minutes or so. Hope you don't have Claustrophobia, we're not sure if the Geth have been setting up down there or not and the place will very likely be dark as hell down there. I hope you're up to it."

"Believe me Kal, I've been through _much_ worse than anything we've been through so far and probably what we'll be facing while we're here. I'm ready for whatever this place has to throw at me; the real question is is everybody _else_?"

Kal took a moment before responding, "If they're not yet, they will be."

* * *

><p>Alright that's the new chapter, and I'm going to apologize ahead of time on this. I am currently in the works of one-shot story that I hope to flesh out.

And I _might_ get a _little_ distracted when I get Battlefield 3 for my PC as well as Witcher II. But I'll try to update soon. I'm actually rather excited about the next chapter.

Let me know what you think. I mean, it may be canon-breaking (kind of) and was probably a bit too much like Star Wars but the Walker was cool right? _-crickets- _oh...

5. Enough Dead Heroes

Okay, first off I want to apologize for how long this took. My side project took longer than I expected and I realized after trying to write the whole underground scene for this chapter that it just wasn't serving any purposes for the story. There was nothing to be gained from character development so instead I fast forwarded a week.

Secondly, I want to thank each and every one of you for being so great. Waiting patiently for this chapter and reaching over 10,000 hits. Over 100 alerts and 72 favorites is staggering. Thank you, all of you.

But I won't hold you any longer, I hope you enjoy the update below.

* * *

><p>Shepard felt that same sensation she had a week ago. Like someone stuck he head in a microwave. Sweat beads were forming on her face and trickling down her skin, her throat felt dry despite having drank water less than an a half an hour ago. But there was no point in complaining about it, especially in front of her team.<p>

Aboard the dropship with her was the two of the four team members she had gathered while she had left Noble Six and Grunt with Tali and the Quarrians. The one sitting beside her was named Kasumi Goto. She was one of the galaxy's best thieves and her appearance and approach to taking on enemies on the battlefield reflected that. She preferred to go cloak and stab the enemy in the back. How she got across the battlefield so quick while in cloak was something of a mystery.

Across from her was another interesting individual, Zaeed Massani. The man was a ruthless killer of a merc. Heck the man had actually started up the Blue Suns until his right hand man "Vido" had stabbed him in the back figuratively, then went to put a bullet in his head literally.

She actually felt rather sick in the stomach looking at him. The man had been so hocked up on revenge that he let a bunch of innocent people die in the fires he started. Shepard regretted not stepping up to protect the people. But the whole situation had her not thinking straight. And because of her fault, who knows how many people died.

As the drop ship neared the ground, the thrusters rumbled getting their own force pushed back at them as they hung only inches from the ground before setting down with a clangin. Shepard nodded Zaeed to give him the privilege of being the first out the drop ship. Shepard followed after feeling a slight relief knowing the shaded areas of the planet weren't cooking like the inside of the craft was.

Shepard tapped her helmet as she looked around the site " which was empty as far as she could tell " as the drop ship lifted off the ground leaving the three of them on the planet's surface.

"Six, Grunt, it's Shepard, are you out there?"

A beat, and then a friendly voice picked up on the other end, though she also heard gunfire and static. "Yes we are Shepard. Grunt, Tali, half of the marines, and I are still intact. We're hunkered down about two klicks from your position. You're directly north of us."

He sounded calm and collected as always, that was a good sign, "I can hear you're in a predicament, how bad is it?"

"Shepard, they've got us pinned with three Colossi and a mess of infantry. Grunt and I have been dealing with this kind of stuff all week but assistance is always appreciated." There was no hint of sarcasm in his voice.

"Roger that, we're on our way." She signaled hand gestures to Zaeed and Kasumi as they began to run forward, heading down a ramp.

"Be advised, Geth are sending in a lot of forces at us. It's very likely you're going to run into plenty on your way."

"Thanks for the heads up Six, we'll be there in no time, rest assured." Shepard reached around her back and grabbed her M-8 Avenger Assault Rifle. The weapon unfolded and constructed in her hand from its compact state. She ran up to the structure before them. Sidling up on the left side, Zaeed took the right while Kasumi went invisible.

"Punch it," Shepard nodded before Zaeed activated the door panel revealing several Geth behind it. As the shots began to fly, Shepard tossed in a firebomb grenade landing at the feet of the largest of the synthetics. The explosion dropped it and the one closest to it leaving only one standing. That didn't last very long however, when Kasumi reappeared behind it and kicked it to the ground before unloading a clip from the M-12 Locust into its back, dropping its shield and tearing through its framework before the systems went offline.

"We're clear, let's go!" Shepard sprinted past Kasumi. Wanting to waste no time in getting to Six, Grunt, and Tali. Too much was on the line, she had already been on edge this entire week fearing that they might've been dead for a while and she couldn't do anything about it. Now that she could, she wanted to get to them as fast as possible.

* * *

><p>Three Colossi, three Colossi. One was a workout, two were a challenge, a Walker was a risk. But three Colossi is just ridiculous. Impossible? Probably not, especially with Shepard's imminent arrival on the scene where she'd be assaulting the mechs from their six. But it sure presented its list of problems.

The Quarian's anti-air turrets had been destroyed, through all the relocating they had to do during the week, some were lost in Geth ambushes underground. Using the tunnel network through Haestrom had been more or less effective of preventing the Geth from getting a clear fix on them. But it didn't take more than a day and a half for the armies to come pouring in once they set up camp. It had made for a hard week on everyone.

And now, the Geth had really been picking up the pace on tracking their position. Drop ships were pouring in from nearly every direction, filling the skies with their horrible humming noises from their thrusters. The infantry hurled fire at their cover, chipping away slowly at the massive stone blocks and metal plating of the barriers.

If there was any advantage in this, it was that the site was set up rather effectively. The Quarians made camp at what could easily be used as a bunker if they needed to retreat on a moments notice. It was on an elevated position that was also shaded â€" well mostly, the time of day was just an hour before sunset and it was messing with the availability of shade.

The site beyond their elevated position â€" which could be reached by two ramps at opposite ends â€" was interesting to say the least. The site stretched for about an eighth of a mile. Whatever was being

built here, it was of peculiar design because there was about 3 sudden drops in the base concrete that made up the structure that would be unfortunate for anyone to fall down. Connecting them were two sets of bridges running parallel with one another. While cover and crates may have been scattered about them and the platforms, it did well to funnel any approaching Geth infantry into one or the other.

The three Colossi were distributed to have one on the platform before the structure the Quarians were set up at. Two platforms behind that, were the other two Colossi who provided support for the one up front.

And on top of that, Geth drop ships kept pouring in.

It was obvious to Six what had to be done, the closest Colossus would not be able to be taken down with the other two ready to pick him off at a moment's notice. He had told this to Kal'Reegar a little while ago. Unfortunately they were low on heavy weapons ammo and there was no way to get to either of the back two Colossi without going through fifty Geth infantry minimum, deadly sunrays, and attacks from the mechs themselves.

As he tore through more and more synthetics, the scenarios he ran through his head continued to run into high chances of failure. And it was really getting on his nerves; too many people here had been counting on him all week. Grunt and him had gone all week with little rest and far less actual sleep, running on sheer determination to do their job. Tali's survival may have really been the objective of his mission but he had made an effort to try and protect everybody. And yet they lost half the team.

Now, their only option was to hold the line. If they failed, they'd retreat into the structure and fortify the door, buying time for Shepard to arrive. He didn't want to consider what came next. In his time apart of Beta Company, situations like those had admittedly scared the hell out of him.

But if this was the only option he had, then what else could he do?

* * *

><p>A sound, a very loud and dragged out sound that could've been mistaken for a roar Shepard imagined a dinosaur would make could be heard through the air. But it came out robotic.<p>

"What the hell was that?"

Zaheed had an answer, "A Walker."

"Walker?" Shepard felt the ground beneath her tremble; this _Walker_ must've been close.

"Simply put, it's the next thing up from the Geth after a Colossus. The damn things are virtually indestructible even by heavy weapons."

Shepard tried to rub her forehead through her helmet, "My god, we don't have time for this." She tapped her helmet's COM system.

"Shepard to Normandy, I need a tactical strike from the main gun. We've got a massive Geth mech down here."

Garrus chimed in, "Roger that Commander, I just finished some calibrations on planet side bombardments in case we needed them."

"Wait, Shepard." Kasumi got her attention; this crazy idea was cooking up in her head.

"What for Goto?"

"This _Noble Six _of yours said they were pinned down by three Colossi right? Perhaps we could use the Walker to our advantage."

"How? Sitting down and getting it to reconsider its programming?" Out in the distance, it stomped yet again, the tremor beneath them almost caused the Commander to stumble.

"Look, I really don't think I actually have time to explain it. Just trust me on it. Okay?"

She didn't give her time to respond, the thief activated her cloak and her shimmer could be seen sprinting to the source of the noise.

'_Not like she gave me a choice.'_ "C'mon Zaeed." She beckoned the merc as they got behind separate pieces of cover.

With another tremor in the ground and a synthetic roar, the two-legged mech appeared on the far wall of the site towering over everything in sight. Its head began to scan the area for any signs of life.

In the Walker's heads up display, the busy display of scrawling text and numbers were running past the screen at high speeds as certain characters and phrases were highlighted. Haestrom's harmful rays make it difficult to do a simple scan-sweep without doing extended analysis to find possible abnormalities â€" or hostile life forms â€" in an environment.

When whole strands of the text began showing up yellow, the software in charge of the system itself dictated that there was in fact hostile life forms â€" humanoid â€" in this canyon. It followed its sequences as it stepped down into the site below while the Geth coordinated and pinpointed the life forms' position.

Outside, Zaeed gazed at Shepard with that look in his eye that said all that needed to be said. The automaton knew they were here, and neither had a clue what their hooded-friend was up to.

Another scan was queued in the sequence, the Geth analyzed the area they had narrowed down their search to and received satisfying results. They calculated two steps forward closer to the signs of life. Another scan concluded it, there was no mistake, they were here.

As the twin cannons on the Walker charged up, Shepard felt her forehead burning and her stomach drop, her body was figuring out what

was going to happen next before it happened. It was pretty obvious to her now what Kasumi had done; she had abandoned them both so they'd distract the Walker as she made a break for it.

Back in the HUD of the Walker, the rapid text began to all flash yellow. Analyzing, it showed that while there may have been hostile's behind some barriers; there was something _on top_ of the mech's head.

Kasumi disabled her cloak as she positioned herself securely atop of the Walker. Placing her right hand on its hull, her Omni-Tool flared to life as she tapped rapidly with her left hand. The sun was beating down her shield.

In the visual display that appeared, before her, her system override software and her own personal additions to the hack were struggling against the unknown amount of Geth housed within the system.

The Walker began to shake, hoping to throw her off. But the thief was too skilled in personal endurance to be moved so easily. Her fingers flared as the display went into a chaotic mess of sequences, protocols, numbers, and visual elements. Below, the synthetic made its roaring sound again from its speakers in a failed act of intimidation. Her shield flashed offline as the radiation began to attack her.

"GOT IT!" The stealth master yelled out to the world, the Walker suddenly stopped its violent shaking and then positioned itself to stand upright and motionless.

Kasumi felt the radiation attacking her body and causing her to go nauseous.

"Oh no," Shepard got out from the cover " along with Zaeed " as they began sprinting towards the mech.

Kasumi fainted and began to slide off the motionless mech, panic filled the merc and the commander as they ran faster than they realized. In a moments notice, Goto was falling to the hard stone floor beneath.

Zaeed got ahead of Shepard and dived forward with his arms stretched out. Timing it just right, he broke the master of stealth's fall and tucked her in his arms as the chest plate of his armor made contact with the stone beneath, he slid for only a moment before the friction prevented further movement.

A beat, and then Zaeed pulled his arms out from under Kasumi's body, "Crazy bitch."

Shepard " who was relieved to know Kasumi was alright " had a question suddenly fill her mind. "Okay so she hacked the vessel, now what? From what I understand, Geth can't be reprogrammed by anything we have available. And if they're part of the larger network they just get changed back."

"I'm wondering about that myself," Zaeed responded as he got to his feet before picking up Kasumi, knowing he would have to carry her until she woke up.

Then a large humming sound could be heard right above them, Shepard and the mercenary's heads shot up realizing that the Walker was looking right back down at them, making sounds as if it just came back online.

* * *

><p>He had heard that, everyone had heard that. None other than a Walker caused the bellowing noise that sounded like a lion used auto-tune. A Walker, that was clearly close by.

Six barked to Kal, "What? Did our sensors go down? How did we not know that thing was inbound?"

"Guess they did, Six." Kal somewhat managed to speak over the noise. "Got any ideas what to do?"

A rumbling in the ground beneath them indicated impending doom, it was followed by a source of light. The Spartan looked upwards from the Colossus beneath to see a site very similar to what they saw early on. There, another Walker stood at the opposite end of the site very much so as the one they destroyed early on. This time however, there was no trap waiting to be triggered for it. There was no plan to stop it.

There was only one viable option. Six got up from his position and yelled out, "EVERYONE GET INSIDE THE STRUCTURE! NOW!"

The marines one at a time, got up from their position and ducked their heads as they sprinted for the door. Their absence from fighting was immediate as Geth began crossing the kill zone and advanced up the ramps. Grunt held the right ramp while Six took the left. As the last one to get inside "Tali" had got inside. Six and Grunt gave up their effort on stopping the synthetics at the ramps and retreated.

When the door sealed behind them, Six took a moment to count heads noticing everyone was still with them. Good. He then took in the building's interior, which was just like every other building here, a cave chewed out of bedrock with equipment scattered about for use "nothing substantial. On the outside the roof of the building was high up, but inside it was apparent that was all solid rock" the ceiling was hardly taller than the Spartan standing in the space now.

"What do we do now?" One of the marines asked, looking at Six and Grunt for answers.

'_Run.' _The Lieutenant's conscious told him. _'We've got nothing to combat the Walker, the Geth will be through that door before you know it and they outnumber us ten to one at this moment. In a few hours they may very well increase their numbers by another ten fold if we're still alive by then.'_

Six looked around the room, disappointed that none of the equipment here was particularly big. It would've been nice to have a bit more of a barricade. With that in account, he told them what he could, "We wait, when Shepard and the others get close, she can support us, and we can re-emerge to attack. Until then, let's hope the door holds."

Grunt scoffed at the suggestion, obviously not proud of the fact they were hiding rather than be in the thick of it. Six turned to him having a few words to say. "As much as I hate to admit it Grunt, you and I both know we don't stand a chance against three Colossi, a Walker, and a mess of infantry." _'And honestly I'm wondering if Shepard's support will actually make that big of a difference.' _

**ZUWAH!**

The sounds of the Walker's canons were unmistakable. The room shook as the lights blink on and off and dust fell from the ceiling.

Everyone inside turned towards the door drawing weapons out of reflex, fearing it wouldn't be long before they busted open and those robotic horrors started pouring through.

"Maybe we should head back down the tunnels." Tali offered with her pistol still pointed at the door.

"No," Six replied flatly.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not leaving Shepard out on a wild goose chase for us. She'll be here soon enough." Oddly enough, Six had put a lot of stock in the Commander despite how little they actually knew each other. But when you think about it, what else was there to put stock into?

"Look Six, no offense but I think we're setting ourselves up to be slaughtered. We have to get underground."

**ZUWAH! **

The canon went off again, but this time the building didn't shake. Silence hung in the air for a moment before something similar to the sound of a Colossus exploding could be heard faintly through the heavy door.

"â€|Did you hear that?" Six lowered his rifle as he approached the door, through its layers came the sound of gunfire

**ZUWAH! **

The shots rang out, like last time it was a distant. Six resulted to tapping his helmet and got a channel to Shepard.

"Shepard, are you at the site? What's going on out there?"

**ZUWAH! **

Again, the shot sounded far off. And once again, the sound of a Colossus exploding could be heard. _'What's going on?' _

Then a friendly voice came in, "Six, come and step outside." It was definitely Shepard, she sounded oddly relaxed considering their situation.

The Spartan stood there for a moment, so confused by the situation at hand that he just decided to do what his Commander had told him to. He motioned to Grunt and everyone else as he stepped forward to the large metal blast door.

"You're not seriously going to open that, are you?" Kal'Reegar halted his action by interjecting like so.

Six turned his head to see him out of the corner of his eye. "I guess so."

The Noble tapped the holo-panel. It quickly interlaced with his Omni-tool before the green indicator twirled and the door began to open by lifting itself up. Everyone besides Grunt took a step back preparing for a mess of Geth. But as the door opened, a very different view presented itself.

Grunt, Six, Tali, Kal, and the rest of the Marines were now looking at the weirdest thing any of them had probably ever seen in their life.

The Walker was firing at the _Geth,_ the two Colossi that were farthest from Six and everything else were destroyed along with a downed drop ship " which the Spartan concluded must've been from the first shot. The last Colossus was throwing everything it had at the Walker as its canon's revved up spelling doom for the final mech.

**ZUWAH! **

The twin rounds of plasma zipped through the air and tore through the heavy shield and the armor plating. The Colossus went offline almost immediately before a humming noise picked up and it exploded in its failsafe measure.

The two-legged twenty foot tall behemoth of machine and metal then fixed its gaze on Geth infantry. And began to blast away making sure to avoid hitting any of the bridges.

Shepard chimed in over the radio, "Anytime you want to stop looking at the show and help us out would be very much appreciated."

Six then noticed there was some gunfire going off near the feet of the Walker, Shepard and a man he didn't recognize where behind shooting at the Geth infantry.

'_Theyâ€| obtained a Walkerâ€|'_

Another voice could be heard, this time coming from the Walker. "All will be explained once the Geth are taken care of." It was cool, calm, and synthetic sounding to a degree. There could be no mistake that was definitely the voice of EDI.

* * *

><p>Five minutes passed, and the battlefield was a total scrap yard of synthetic bits lying everywhere. Shepard, Six, Tali, and Grunt were standing under the shade of the Walker as they huddled around for everything to be explained.<p>

"So, Kasumi over there," Shepard pointed to the still-unconscious thief propped up against a wall in the shade, "had jumped on top of the Walker and broke through its security systems. She went unconscious just as the mech had been put offline, damn sun and allâ€¦"

EDI took the pause as a chance for her to explain, over the speakers of the Geth war machine she spoke down to them. "Once she broke through security, I managed to breach the system and isolate the machine from the local Geth network using the data in her Omni-tool. I then proceeded to purge all remaining Geth software from the database and took remote control over the vessel."

Shepard walked over to Zaeed who was running his Omni-tool over the unconscious hacker that was propped up against a crate and asked, "What's her condition anyway?"

"She'll be fine, the radiation got to her head a little, but with a little treatment on the ship she'll be back on her feet in no time."

The Commander nodded before she turned back around to everyone saying, "Well why we're on the subject of ships. I'm wondering if the Car'voia has survived the week and is ready to take the Quarians off this rock."

"Yes," Tali nodded before continuing, "We hid it a half a klick from this position. Kal'Reegar should actually be on his way here with it now."

"Good to hear." She turned her attention towards her Lieutenant and Krogan teammate. Having not seen either of them in a week and worried about their survival, it was good to know they were both still in one piece. "How'd you both hold up?"

Six shrugged slightly, "Well enough I suppose, though I'm not happy about losing half the Marines. And I think I pissed Grunt off a few times when we had to run from a fight rather than get in the thick of it."

"Heh," the Krogan snorted and laughed at the same time. "I'm telling you, we could've had downed that entire underground patrol if we charged them." There was a hint of malice in his tone, but Grunt found it difficult to be angry with the Spartan. Both of them had been there for each other all week through thick and thin. And despite times the human choose flight over fight, Six always had his back. But the Krogan had to admit, these past few days he had been feeling extremely restless and was acting with more anger in his tone than he would've liked using. Luckily for him, the Geth's presence did well as an outlet to his frustration.

"Well, we don't have to worry about them anymore. Once we get off this rock."

"Indeed," Shepard pivoted towards Tali before asking. "Are you ready to come with us?"

"Yes, I was able to harness the information we came here for. Getting readings of the sun and pulling up records that were stored here. It

wasn't much, but I hope the Admiralty Board finds something to use with it."

Six took a little interest, "What was the information about exactly?"

The mechanic sighed before she responded flatly, "stars blowing upâ€|"

It took a moment to sink in for the Lieutenant. _'That's it? We lost eleven men for some data on stars blowing up? Really?' _he kept his thoughts to himself knowing there was no point in voicing them.

At that moment, he didn't really want to discuss anything else. He just wanted to get back on the Normandy and put this wretched planet behind him.

He would have to make sure he said his farewells to Kal. The Quarian had been a great help and a good leader for the entirety of their time on Haestrom. And Six felt that he owed him at least a few words of appreciation.

* * *

><p>Arriving on the Normandy was a welcome feeling for the Spartan. It was good to be away from the constant threat of Geth, away from having toâ€| defend. He vowed to himself that he would never end up being on the defensive again. Defending only lead to the people around him dying. Like he brought up before, Beta Company had been through that, and those memories sent an all too-human chill down his spine.

Six tried not to think of his fallen brothers and sisters too much. He knew that if there really was a heaven out there as many in the UNSC believed, then they were they glad to know he was still kicking. Though being in another universe, he questioned if they could still see him. But none of that afterlife/religion stuff made sense to him, he was a Spartan and he had one job that kept him pretty occupied.

Though given hisâ€| predicament. The Lieutenant began to wonder if his time as a Spartan really mattered anymore. Which seemed so odd for him to ask himself when it was all he really ever knew. What else could he do? It wasn't like he could take a step back from it all and just have time to sit down and realize he was tired of being a soldier and wanted to pursue a life inâ€| sayâ€| baking. Not that he would dare ever think about giving up his gun for a rolling pin.

'_What am I on about anyway?' _He asked himself as he stopped his train of thought. Trying to dismiss the stupid ideas running through his head. As of now, he was still a Spartan; just a Spartan somewhere he shouldn't. He still had no idea how in the world â€" no universe â€" he ended up here. The final few hours on Reach were practically lost to him. _'But I guess that's why we got Tali here safe and sound right?' _he pondered, already knowing the answer to the obvious question.

He stopped thinking to himself as he noticed Shepard approach him, the look on her face was hard to read. _'Obviously something on her

mind,' _"What do you need, Shepard?"

Shepard ruffled her sweaty hair with her right hand covered by the glove before she spoke, "Well first things first, we need to debrief you and Grunt and welcome Tali. Secondly, you and I are going to talk about something crucial."

'_Crucialâ€|' _the word hung in his mind, not really sure if he wanted to wait until after Tali's introduction aboard the Normandy. "Shepard, if it's crucial, shouldn't we discuss it now?"

"It can wait."

'_What? It's crucial but it can wait? That doesn't make any sense. Okay honestly Six lighten up, and get a grip.' _

"Also," Shepard began before she leaned in towards Six and lowered her voice to a whisper. "What did you tell Tali?"

"Just about everything, except for the fact where I'm really from. I did my best to avoid lying."

"Good, cause I'm not sure how she'll take the news and what that means about unearthing the layers of your suit. But it has got to be better if you're honest with her." _"Honest with her? You make them sound like they're a young couple. Oh that would be so precious wouldn't it? Suit-wearing aliens â€" one from another planet, another from another universe â€" In love, sharing tender moments huddled together while working on the ship's engine... God, I'm pathetic sometimes.' _"Best we get going up to the _comm _room then. You can tell her the truth when we're ready to."

"Certainly," Six agreed as Shepard and him got into the elevator together. The door shutting behind them, he began detailing the partial lie he told Tali to his Commander.

* * *

><p>"Cerberus saw footage of you in action Tali'Zorah. We're looking forward to having you on the team. Your engineering expertise will really benefit the mission." Jacob began in the most respectful and polite way he possibly could. Remembering the Quarians back on Freedom's Progress, getting any respect back from Tali was going to take a lot of work.<p>

He was correct in assuming that, Tali was giving him the death look with her bright eyes through cloudy visor as she responded. "I don't know who you are, but Cerberus threatened the security of the Migrant Fleet. Don't make nice."

Shepard â€" who was standing next to Six â€" began, "Well it's a good reason you're aboard Tali. You're not the only one here that doesn't trust Cerberus."

"Says the Commander standing next to someone who does." Tali spit, not realizing what she said until afterwards almost regretting the malice in her tone.

"That's kind of harsh don't you think?"

"It's true though Shepard, Six told me himself he held nothing against those _bosh'tets _despite all they've done to not only the Flotilla, but the rest of the galaxy."

"That's because, unlike us, Six doesn't have any bias. He hasn't heard of Cerberus until he became apart of my crew."

"How is that even possible anyway?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, _Six _here explained to me that the team he used to be apart of operated in an isolated part of the galaxy and somehow managed to have vastly different technology than the rest of us. How does that even work? What _isolated_ part of the galaxy is there that would have so much going on they would need Special Forces? What sort of Special Forces would only operate within there when they could be valued somewhere else? And even so, with a lifetime of experience, how did he never hear of Cerberus?"

The words hung in the air for a moment as Shepard thought to herself, _'Now is the time.' _She gave Six that knowing look, nodding to him giving him the go-ahead.

He took a deep breath before he addressed the Quarian, "It's because, Tali, that the story I told you wasn't entirely true."

If the mechanic's face was visible, one would find a look of someone who was dumbfounded. "Youâ€| lied to me? Why? What does this have to do with you not knowing Cerberus?"

"I didn't completely lie to you, and I can assure you I didn't do it maliciously, but rather so it wouldn't get in the way of our mission on Haestrom." Tali stayed silent giving the Noble the clear to continue. "Tali, I'm not from some secluded apart of the galaxy, I'm from a parallel universe."

Silence, followed by laughter from the Quarian in the room. "You are joking, right?"

"â€|No, I'm not."

She looked at Shepard half-wondering why she wasn't laughing herself. "You _believe _this lunacy, Shepard? Someone from a parallel universe? That's not possible."

"As unlikely as it sounds, Tali, it is actually possible. And all the evidence points towards it for Six here." The Commander crossed her arms for emphasis.

"Evidence? Like what, Shepard?"

"Well for one thing he was found by the Blue Suns ten years ago drifting in space in the exact same armor he's wearing now, near a Relay. Secondly, he has physical strength to match a Krogan Warlord â€" which no human has â€" as well as the combat training to kill one with one swing of a combat knife â€" you've seen some of his expertise yourself. Third, the moment we started talking to him he acted like he was still in his universe. Fourth, his armor's systems are designed on a very different architecture than our own. Lastly,

when he was on the ship he was either spending all of his time learning of our universe or sending me messages filled with stuff he remembered on his own and there are far too many details to be some made up _bee-ess_. If he's lying or insane, he's got the most believable story in history."

The drifter didn't really know what she could rebuke against that, she let the thoughts sink in for a moment, sighing to herself as she thought it over. The doubt still lingered, "I'mâ€| not sure I can believe this, Shepard."

"Well, fortunately you don't have to believe anything to crack through failsafe measures on hardware."

"Heh, trueâ€|"

"I know it's a lot to take in right now Tali, for the record I wouldn't have believed it either if he told me himself he was from a parallel universe. Jacob here arrived at the conclusion himself." She motioned to Taylor who was standing silently knowing he had no place in the current conversation. _'I know you'll come to believe it sooner or later. You've always trusted my judgment.'_ "In the meantime, Taylor here, will make sure you have access to all documentation on the engine when you're free to work on it if you chose to â€" won't you Taylor."

"Yes ma'am."

"Good," Shepard uncrossed her arms and gave a warm smile to her Quarian friend. "It's good to have you back aboard, Tali."

"Likewise, Shepard, despite theâ€| peculiar circumstances." She didn't really find the need to say anything else as she decided to take her leave, walking past the commander and the lieutenant while three sets of eyes followed her out of the room until the door closed behind her.

"â€|That went overâ€| better than we could've hopedâ€| I think." Six tried to consider the other possible and _logical _scenarios that might've occurred giving what he knew of Tali's personality type over the week.

"Well, she's still going to need time to fully adjust. You can make it easy on her by being open with her once she starts messing with your armor system, alright?"

"I will try my best, Shepard."

"Good, now onto the other thing I wanted to talk about."

Six had been secretly waiting for this to come up wondering what it could be about. "I'm all ears."

Shepard looked up towards the ceiling and called out, "_Eee-Dee, _Show Six the liberty you've taken while he was gone."

Then in the middle of the conference table, a blue phasing occurred for a moment before a hologram very much unlike the one the Spartan saw a week ago appeared in front of him.

"Ohâ€|" "

* * *

><p>There, after 2 and a half months of absence that's what I have to show for it. With the sub-plot of Haestrom out of the way we are on track to the real juicy bits which I am excited to get onto.

I have other projects I'm working on though - I'm writing out the pitch bible to a medieval/fantasy universe I've been developing since I was 10 - I'm occupied heavily with video games - surprisingly I've hardly played Mass Effect 3 as I've been hitting up Blacklight: Retribution and Tribes: Ascend. Also been looking into modding Morrowind, playing Reckoning, more Skyrim, need to get back into Reach sometime...

**As always if you have questions/concerns feel free to voice them in a review or PM me, I will get back to you both ways via PM. I will use my profile page to post updates on the status infrequently.
**

Thanks for reading, I will do my best to get out the next chapter sooner than this one came. As I sad, I'm glad to be leaving Haestrom behind.

End
file.